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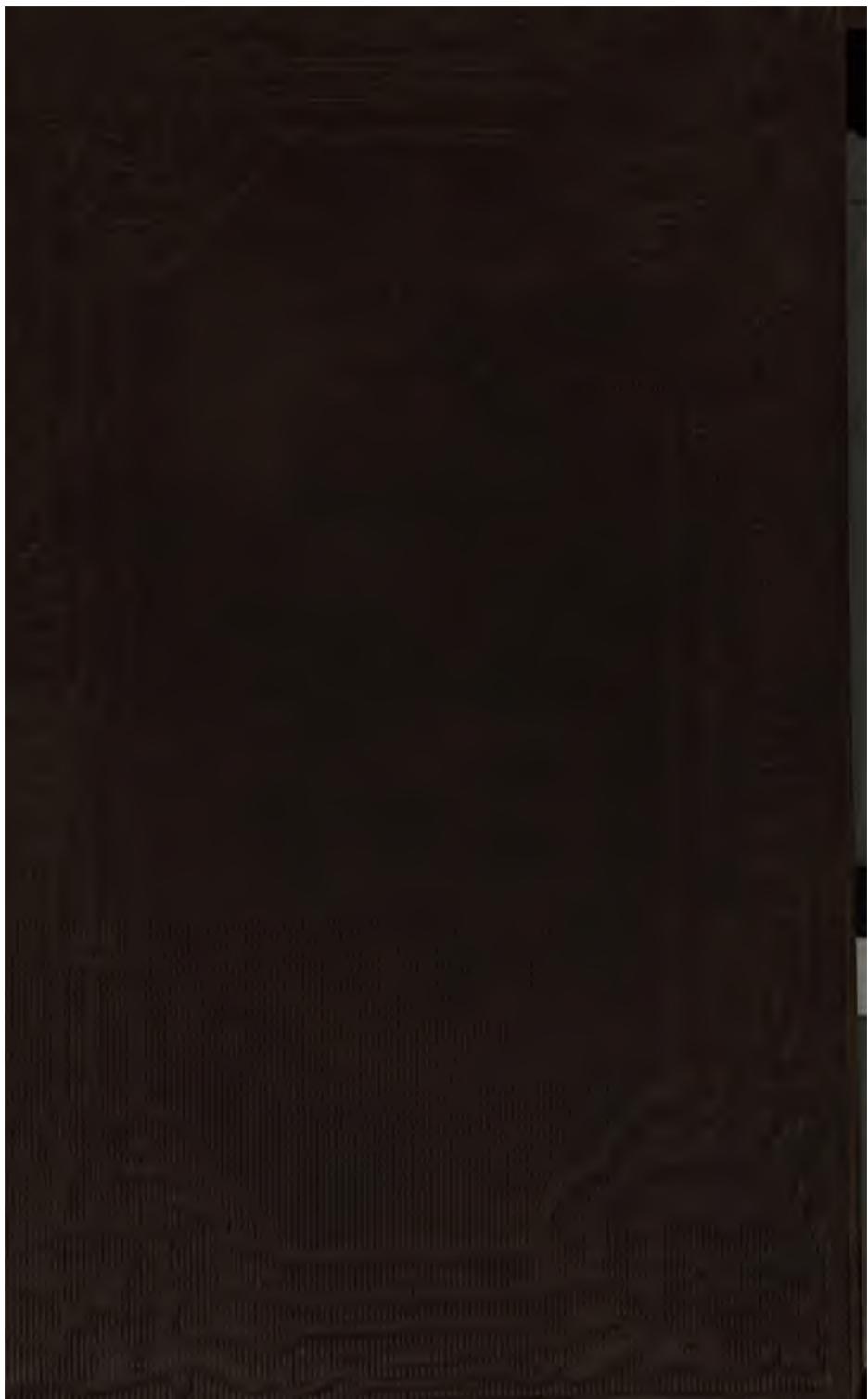
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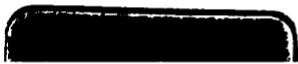
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ASPEN COURT:

A STORY OF OUR OWN TIME.

BY SHIRLEY BROOKS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

“In diebus illis non erat Rex in Israel: sed unusquisque quod sibi
rectum videbatur, hoc faciebat.”—*Judges* xxi. 25.

LONDON :
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1855.

249. v. ~~188~~.
144.

LONDON
E. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.



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ASPEN COURT ;
A STORY OF OUR OWN TIME.

CHAPTER I.

LIVING IN ONE'S FRIENDS' RECOLLECTIONS.

THE clock at St. James' palace has struck eight, and many gentlemen who design to dine at the Lycurgus Club, are studying the *carte*, performing, meanwhile, that curious series of grimaces and frowns with which an Englishman helps himself to invent his dinner. The cabs and broughams have been arriving rather thickly during the last quarter of an hour, from which it is gathered that the dinner-bell is on its honourable legs in the House of Commons.

“Who's up, Ambergate?” inquires an exceedingly handsome young gentleman in black, with an inconceivably faultless white cravat, of another young gentleman of similarly irreproachable appearance, who has just come in, and looks round with an expression of hopeless, yet manly despair, at finding all his favourite seats occupied.

"Philip Bobus is speaking, Freddy Belt," replies Lord Ambergate, "and likely to speak. And have you ordered your dinner, Freddy Belt? I'll dine with you. What have you ordered? But I don't care. Waiter, I will have whatever Sir Frederic has ordered. Here comes Acton Calveley. Bobus, of course, Acton?"

"Good for an hour and a half, at least. He has several hundred-weight of papers with him. You two fellows can't have dined; I saw Ambergate in the House half an hour ago."

"No, you come here. Belt has ordered my dinner, let him order yours."

"I don't care. Very well. I meant to dress. But I don't care. Palestine soup, Belt? That's the only thing on my mind."

"Be relieved, then, for here it is."

"Divide to-night?" asked Sir Frederic Belt.

"Well, Whiphamp was mysterious, and didn't want me to go away. He mumbled something about somebody being unwell," said Lord Ambergate. "This is not the wine old Boomerang was hooraying, and letting off fireworks about, the other morning?"

"Yes it is, though," said Frederic Belt.

"Now, upon my word," said Calveley, very earnestly, "something must be said to Boomy. One don't expect a middle-aged heavy to know much, but he has no right to stand on that rug, and tell

gross untruths. To hear him exult about that wine, you'd have thought the committee had broken into the Prophet's cellar, and seized the stuff with the musk seals, which the houris are keeping for me and the other blessed."

"Since Acton went to Jericho, or wherever it was," drawled Sir Frederic, "there has been an east-wind constantly blowing through his brains. I hoped his book had exhausted all his stock of Orientalisms."

"The book is a charming book," said Acton Calveley.

"O, mind, I'm not dispraising it," said Freddy Belt; "on the contrary, a reviewing man told me there were several things in it that surprised him. I forgot to ask him why? Here's Tom Crowsfoot —how well that fellow wears! Bobus, Crowsfoot?"

"The Bobus! You may be interested in hearing that he has reached his fifth orange. William Lyndon has bet me that Bobus makes up the dozen."

"A quarter to nine," said Ambergate, thoughtfully. "No, he won't. I'll go halves with you, Tom, if you like."

"There's a good lot of colonies, here and there," said Freddy Belt, "and it's the colonies he's on, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," replied Lord Ambergate; "at least sugar, and refining in bond, whatever that is,

and differential duties—I know I heard something about them—and tonnage, which I suppose is some other colonial production.”

“Bought a yacht, and knows no better than that,” said Tom Crowsfoot, laughing.

“Eh? Ah!” said Lord Ambergate, after a pause. “Do you know, I didn’t look at it in that light? Yes, ships, of course. By Jove, I’ve a great mind to go down and speak on the question.”

“I’ve something to say to you, Ambergate,” said Tom Crowsfoot, “I’m old enough to be your father, you know, and so I don’t mind catechising you.”

“The Earl himself never did,” observed his lordship; “I suppose he was afraid I should tell him my belief as to a parent’s duty to his children, especially the eldest, a subject upon which he is in a painful state of obfuscation.”

“But see here, Ambergate,” said Tom; “I want to ask you something, all for your good. What do you let yourself be seen speaking to a lawyer for, in a public thoroughfare?”

“Lawyer, lawyer!” replied Ambergate, musingly; “I don’t know what you refer to. Let’s see. I met Kingsilver the other day, and congratulated him on being made a judge—do you mean that?”

“No,” said Tom, “I never heard anybody call *him* a lawyer. This was to-day, in Bond-street; I saw you myself.”

“O, by Jove!” said Lord Ambergate, sitting

upright, and speaking so loud, that several men looked up from their dinners; "I'm devilish glad you mentioned that. I want to tell you something, and it deeply concerns your interest, Acton Calveley."

"How good of you to think of it at last, then!" said Calveley.

"Ah! don't talk in that way," replied Ambergate; "you know what a beast of a memory mine is. But, I say, this is a fact, mind. Henry Wilmslow's all right again."

"Henry Wilmslow!"

"Henry Wilmslow!"

So exclaimed together, Calveley and Sir Frederic. Tom Crowsfoot, being an older man, made no further demonstration than that of opening his bright black eyes a little wider than usual, and slightly compressing his thin lips. I have some notion that Tom did not believe in the possibility of anybody ever being quite all right. He knew that he had never been so during thirty-five years upon town, though one fortune to start with, one by marriage, and one by legacy, had not been bad material to work with.

"All right," persisted Lord Ambergate; "and the lawyer Tom speaks of was Penkridge, partner to a great rich attorney, called Molesworth, of whom you may have heard."

"I have," said Tom Crowsfoot, quietly. Per-

haps he had, Molesworth having had occasion to outlaw Tom, at the suit of a leash of jewellers, in days when Tom was younger, and liked to see his presents glitter behind the footlights; he had got over that weakness, however, long ago, and some beliefs akin to it.

“ Well, you all remember Wilmslow, I fancy, though he is years older than any of us. He used to come here, sometimes, about the time when I was elected, but I believe it was a little risky, and that if a card was brought up to him, he fidgetted, and seldom stayed long—you know the symptoms —came on Sundays, too, which is sometimes a greater proof of a man’s invisibility than your never seeing him. Finally, he vanished, and his name has got out of our list, *pour cause*.”

“ He married Jane Tracy,” said Tom, “ but that was when he was in the Guards. Deuced handsome fellow then—a little too row-de-dow for my taste—but showy, and plenty to say, such as it was. In fact, I don’t know that Wilmslow wasn’t about as pleasant a fellow as a noisy officer in debt can be.”

“ Not a bad match, that Tracy girl, at least for him,” said Frederic Belt; “ for he was up to his ears then, and she had fifteen hundred a-year. And I think there was something about a claim to a large estate in Gloucestershire, or somewhere, which, I suppose, however, was all moonshine.”

"Just what it wasn't, Freddy Belt, and what I'm coming to. Jane Tracy was heiress to this very estate, supposing her claim was valid. It slept a long time, but at last Molesworth, this lawyer, took it up in earnest. It seems he has a way of succeeding in things."

"Rather a useful faculty, I should say, in a lawyer," said Calveley, "and not bad for anybody to have."

"Authors on the East, particularly," said Ambergate. "Well, Molesworth has been prosecuting this claim of Jane Tracy's and with his usual luck. The estate, which is that of Aspen Court, in the best part of Gloucestershire, is worth five thousand a-year, and the law has given it to our friend, Mr. Henry Wilmslow."

"He'll soon run through it," said Tom, composedly; "I see how it will melt away in his hands." And he thought how easily three fortunes had melted in his own.

"Why," said Sir Frederic, "you know Wilmslow's had a lesson. I suppose he's a sort of ass, but he must be over fifty, and has been awfully hard up, which, at that time of life, is the deuce. Then he has a wife and some children, not that *they* would make much difference in his going on, perhaps, unless he were personally worried. But I should say the chances are, that he will clear off

a bit, and save and be selfish in the country. He will, if he isn't a blockhead."

"He let me in about some infernal insurances," said Acton Calveley. "I was just of age, and he talked me over, and so I became one of his securities."

"It doesn't say much for the electors of Wobblebridge that they have chosen a man who, at any period of life, could be talked into anything by Henry Wilmslow," said Tom Crowsfoot; "but that won't do, Master Orientalist. Wilmslow talked to somebody else besides you."

Acton Calveley coloured a little, and drank a glass of claret.

"I was a great fool," he said frankly, "but I have paid for my folly. I wonder whether I shall get anything out of him now."

"See an attorney, and be quick," said Freddy Belt. "If you come down upon him at the moment of his good fortune, you may snatch something. I say, isn't it odd no fellow has come in from the House lately? Waiter, bring the paper."

The invaluable document which allows our legislators to dine in peace, or to hear Alboni's second act, was brought him,—the written return, which is supplied to the clubs and the opera-houses, of the state of the House of Commons at

certain periods of the evening. But it contained no more than they knew.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.			
8	Colonial Restrictions Bill.	Mr. BOBUS.	<i>House emptying.</i>
1 p. 8	• . . .	Ditto.	<i>House rather empty.</i>
9	• . . .	Ditto.	<i>House very empty.</i>

"We should hear," said Ambergate. "Whipham would send, of course, if necessary. Have some more claret."

"Perhaps, now Wilmslow's up again, he'll stand for somewhere in Gloucestershire," said Sir Frederic; "it would be just like him. I knew Jane Tracy a little, and rather pitied her than not, when I heard she was to have him."

"We know a bad husband or two, I take it," said Tom Crowsfoot, smiling.

"There are such persons, I am told," said Frederic Belt, who had been divorced himself, and the cause of divorce in others; "but you will find that it is invariably the wife's fault."

This was unanimously assented to; Tom Crowsfoot, who, as a gentleman, really wished to do justice, appending to his verdict,—

"That is to say, you know, that it is her fault somehow or other."

"As regards poor Mrs. Tracy," said Acton Calveley, "though of course we should find it was

her fault if we went to the bottom of the business,— for, as the sultan remarked in the Eastern tale—”

“Please, Calveley,” said Lord Ambergate, deprecatingly. “There will be a new edition of ‘Puffs from the Narghilè,’ in which you can use all those stories without annoying friends who do not read your works.”

“I was going to say,” continued Acton, unper- turbed, “that, though Mrs. Tracy’s faults doubt- less were the cause of Wilmslow’s being a donkey, and extravagant, and faithless, and so forth, the woman has managed to keep them very secret, for she appeared to me the most patient, affectionate, allowance-making creature I ever saw; and I be- lieve her to be so.”

“One never knows what to believe in this world,” said Tom Crowsfoot; “she may have added to her other offences by hypocrisy. Some women are bad enough for that, I am told, be- sides having read so in books.”

“Jane Wilmslow has had a hard time of it with the precious Henry,” said Acton. “And though I should perhaps lose by it, I should not mind hearing that the estate comes to her for her separate use, and that he can’t touch a shilling of the rents. How’s that, Ambergate?”

“I don’t think it’s quite that, but Penkridge said something about Molesworth having made Henry Wilmslow sign some deeds or settlements,

and so managing that he cannot proceed to instant duckery and drakery. I say, here's Jimmy Vulture with an opera-glass; see how he is glaring round the room. We're wanted, I believe. Here, waiter, ask Mr. Vulture if he is looking for us. What is it, Vulture James?" he said, as a remarkably ugly little man, with a bald-head, fringed all round with yellow hair, hurried up to the table.

"Come down at once," he said in a fierce whisper. "There's the deuce and all to pay; Whipharn's tearing his hair!"

"Well, he has not got much, so that amusement won't last him long," said Calveley. "But what's on? Is Bobus down?"

"An hour ago and more; but come on," said Mr. Vulture, nervously, "I've undertaken to bring you."

"But did you happen to count how many oranges Bobus had sucked?" said Tom Crowsfoot, making ready, however, to be off. A practicable man that Tom Crowsfoot.

"Oranges! Come, Lord Ambergate, there's a good fellow," pleaded Vulture; "Sir Frederic, pray make haste!"

"My dear Vulture," said Freddy Belt, "we are not promised places if we help Whipharn well through this session."

"But if you think I am to have one, it would

be good-natured to help *me*," said Mr. Vulture, obliged to bring out his private hopes as an argument with the loungers.

"Nay, if you make it a personal thing, Vulture James, we 'll save the colonies and the country to oblige you. But you won't say what has happened?"

"Bobus was taken ill, and obliged to stop. Lord Malachite got up to answer him, but broke down ; but those fellows are whipping, and though M'Dangle has promised to do his best, I don't suppose they'll hear him, he's such a bore. You see everybody's away, as no one is expected to care about those cursed colonies enough to sit out a debate."

"No, that's true enough," said Lord Ambergate. "Colonies are a great mistake, to my mind. However, we must go. Calveley, I 'll take you down, if you like, binding yourself, that is, not to tell one Eastern story between this and the House."

It is satisfactory to know that they arrived in time for the division, and that the claims of her Majesty's colonies were, once more, indefinitely postponed. Bobus was beaten, thanks to the law-givers of the Lycurgus.

CHAPTER II.

ASPEN COURT.

I HOPE that in time you will like the old house in Gloucestershire, but I am obliged to say that it has no particular beauty to recommend it to you at first sight. It stands half way up a gentle elevation, is surrounded by woods as old as itself,—for the Dryads of Aspen have as yet never shuddered at the sound of dice,—and it is of no exclusive style of architecture, though the Elizabethan is predominant. The fact is that the owners of Aspen Court, for the time being, have made such alterations as they deemed desirable for safety or comfort, with the boldest disregard for keeping and *coup-d'œil*. And therefore, though a very good idea of the general character of the house may be imparted in a few words, nothing save tinted plans and figured references (which might be a little in the way if introduced here), could guide a stranger through the labyrinth of rooms which one owner has thrust out, and another has piled up, and a third has hung on, wherever it has seemed convenient, during a couple of hundred years and upwards, to make

such supposed improvements. But if you will be good enough to imagine an exceedingly long red brick front, with a monstrous door in the centre, protected by a portico, and will draw along this front two lines of windows, originally uniform, but now varying from the modern French double window, to the simple old diamond lattice with its hazy glass, and including in their motley ranks those huge ugly square staring sashes, with twenty-four square panes, which you see in the cuts to story-books of Queen Anne's time—the dapper windows of ordinary suburban architecture—and, quite at the east end, two openings with only a couple of very large panes in each, the latest improvement of all,—you will have a tolerably accurate notion of the front of Aspen Court. There are but two regular stories, but, above the front, there rises a mountainous mass of tiles, beneath which are innumerable attics, and though in that red waste you scarcely notice the loopholes which light these chambers, yet, when sunlight falls athwart the house, the tiny glasses sparkle out, and the roof becomes the feature of the edifice. Tall chimneys and short ones, with variations of sturdy stacks, and even of pert pipes, garnish this mountain, and, in short, an eye which by instinct loves regularity, or has been trained to look for style, is teased as mercilessly at Aspen Court as at any place I have ever seen.

Behind this front, and running from it at right angles, are two rows of buildings, even more irregular in point of architecture, but keeping their lines tolerably straight. That on the west side is chiefly composed of stables and other offices, over which are apartments for servants, store-houses, and lumber-rooms. The line to the east side is of a better character; there is a series of good, but prim-looking rooms on the ground-floor, and on that above it are some more pleasant and more modern apartments, with Venetian blinds, and balconies for flowers outside the windows. Part of this range of building is quite modern, and has been whitened, and some rustic work and a verandah have been introduced, and there is a chintzy, cottagy look about this portion, in spite of its being set in the midst of red brick and stiff style. The ground thus enclosed on three sides is really a great grass plot, but is so thick with trees, and is so studded with flower mounds, and rustic-workcases full of scarlet geraniums, that we see but little of the green, except just round a clear quiet pool in the centre, with water-lilies and gold-fishes. Three or four classical statues, erected in the age when men stuck up Latin inscriptions in their arbours, and talked about their Muse when they made rhymes, are still standing among the trees, but have been somewhat damaged, from having been used as targets by schoolboy marks-

men, whose pistol fingers have long been straightened for ever. This grass-garden is sheltered from observation by the inhabitants on the domestic side, by a very lofty trellise, covered with rich creepers of various kinds, which indeed have formed so massive a screen that additional bulwarks have been necessary to prop it up, and it sometimes waves in the wind like a gigantic Indian fan. A tall thick hedge completes the quadrangle, but a gap seems to have been sliced through it, and, passing on, we find the garden continued up the gentle slope, and terminated by a cluster of old trees which crown the height.

But there is one feature more, which we must not forget to notice, though the foliage encloses it so completely that it might almost escape a careless observer. Turn round, now that we have reached the limit of the garden, and at the east end of the house, and now of course to your left hand, you will make out a low, white spire. That is the church of Aspen; it is attached to the house, through which its owners have a private entrance to the little aisle. The church has been unimproved amid all the improvements of the mansion, none of whose owners have reproached themselves, like the Hebrew king, that while they had a house of cedar, the ark dwelt in tents. It is a quiet, little, rude old edifice, round which the moss has clung with an affection time has but increased,

and the almost shapeless interior, disfigured by undertakers' hatchments, and by sprawling texts from the Proverbs, is not without a solemnity, to which the obscurity, caused by the over-topping woods around, contributes much. Few rays of sunshine fall upon the rough pavement of Aspen Church, or aid the eye to decipher the last memorials of the Tracys of Aspen Court. Many of these are buried here, and there is one tomb, of old date, which seems strangely costly, with its kneeling rows of figures, and its gilded legend, for its place in this remote nook. Later monuments are also here, but chiefly mural, one of them bearing a long Latin inscription to the memory of the man who erected the undressed statues, and is full of sibilant superlatives, which seem to hiss at the adulation they record. We have also an urn, and a plump but desponding Virtue hugging it, the particular Tracy whose ashes, after his body had been burnt (as usual in England), are supposed to have been placed within, having been one of the patriots whom Walpole did not find unpurchasable, and the profits of whose sinecure added many acres to the Aspen Court territory. The last in date is a neat tablet from Regent Street, and came down in a box by the Bristol mail.

Every respectable old family house is haunted. I suppose it would be common-place to present this fact in a different form, and say that few old

families are so happy as to escape, for a long series of years, that guilt, or the imputation of that guilt, which generates superstitious terror among their dependents. Assuredly the Aspen Court family is not one of the exceptions. For, in addition to an apparition, of which I am not disposed, just now, to speak, though, before a reader reaches the end of this story, something will have to be said about it, there is a little ghost in the family, and one in which I do not know whether to believe or not. The rustics at Aspen, the small village which lies about half a mile from the house, have a very painful story about this spectre. They allege that a poor little child, who was wilfully and systematically terrified into idiotcy, and who died in one of the paroxysms of agony produced by a hideous figure which its guardian brought to the foot of its bed in the dead of night, may be seen, at the same hour, leaping about the church in which that wicked woman's last bed is made, and mopping and mowing beside the grave in the hope of repaying its own torments in life. And for the first portion of this frightful story I fear there is too much foundation.

And so much for the general aspect of Aspen Court. With the interior, so far as it is possible to understand it, we shall become acquainted as we go on. But the great hall of the Aspen mansion is entitled to be mentioned at once. We saw

the portico, through which we reach the great door of the house. Throw that door open, and you are at one side of an enormous chamber, extending right and left of you. At the extreme end are a few stone steps leading up to the doors of other apartments. Opposite you is a huge chimney-mouth, with its ancient fire-dogs, and with massive carving above and at its sides. The hall is very lofty, and on the side opposite the windows are numerous family portraits, of several generations. There are also portraits at the ends of the chamber, on each side of the smaller doors. Above, and all round, hang armour and weapons, as pikes, carabines, and swords, which have done their work in their time. They were nailed up here soon after Naseby. A young lord of Aspen was there, and they brought him home to die of a pistol-shot fired by a dying Ironside whom he had cut down in the fight. His mother caused all her tenantry to fix up their arms here on the day of his funeral, saying, with a calm sorrow, that "Aspen had done enough." The large red curtain, at the opposite corner, and on your right, covers an arched opening, which leads to the other parts of the house. Near that curtain is an old clock, of singular elaboration. It is French, and very old, and having once ceased to perform its work, there was no hope for it, for not in Gloucestershire, and

perhaps not in London itself, was there a mechanic who could deal with these mystic arrangements. The mere hour of the day the machine told, but haughtily, and at a corner, as if such a trumpery piece of information were beneath its learned dignity. But it told much deeper things. The age of Luna, and her aspect to Sol, and that same Sol's own aspect on snow-fields, or wheat-fields, as the case might be. And the day of the week, and of the month, and of the year, and the Dominical letter, and some of those dates which theology so queerly borrows from astronomy. And the zodiac is there, with its procession of starry beasts and babies, and a Virgo, with whose prim prettiness several generations of boys have fallen in love in that hall. And a curiously wreathed barometer once curled itself, like a great red vein, round the face of the clock, but the red liquor has long been dry. The old clock tells nothing now but the hour at which it died; and even this is doubtful, for the other revelations in no reasonable way coincide—the month is December, and the sun is scorching down upon a golden harvest—and it is the second Sunday after Easter.

And now come back to the door of the great hall and look out. Rich acres lie before you, and all belong to the domain of Aspen Court. Beyond this smooth lawn, and beyond those grey oaks, and

beyond all that green pasture where the cattle are feeding, and far away to where you see broad water,

“The Severn swift, guilty of maiden’s death.”

Aspen Court means half a parish and a score of farms, and such a list of freeholds, leaseholds, and copyholds, as nobody, without the aid of the steward’s rent-rolls, can pretend to give you. Allow that the gentlemen at the Lycurgus were justified in thinking that Henry Wilmslow had been lucky.

CHAPTER III.

A LAWYER'S OFFICE, AND SOME OF THE CLERKS.

THE offices of Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge, the solicitors, of whom mention has been made, were "situate, lying, and being" (as new young gentlemen who studied the law therein thought it rather witty to say) in one of the streets near Red Lion Square. Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge were most respectable practitioners, who chiefly attended to "conveyancing," but had a few profitable old Chancery suits in their keeping, in respect of the costs of which they by no means forgot to attend for the Accountant-General's cheques, just before his door in Chancery Lane closed for the long vacation. They did not refuse to attend to common law, but it was put out to nurse, and a common-law clerk was kept, in order that those interested in the fate of their causes might receive tolerably plausible answers. Nor was this precaution unwise, for valuable clients have been frightened away, by their advisers presuming too much upon the ignorance of the outside world as to the technicalities of law. There is a tradition of a very athletic attorney, who instead

of being, as usual, after the hounds, came to office one day in the working partner's absence, and unhappily seeing a very rich and litigious client of the house, drove him away for ever, by replying to his inquiries about one of his actions, that he believed, in point of fact, that the livery of seisin had been duly stamped, and that they were only waiting for the Chancellor to issue his mandamus for the examination of the casual ejector. Therefore I think that Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge were quite right in paying a wiry little man, whose only weakness was waistcoats, the sum of two pounds a-week, to avoid any such accident.

Then they had a head conveyancing clerk, a wonderful old gentleman, Mr. Ghirk, who could carry in his head the most complicated details of a pedigree, never turning a circle into a lozenge, or confounding the scion who died *sine prole* with one who died single. But he was so dreadfully stupid about everything else, that having once, on his birthday, it was supposed, invited one of the articled clerks to spend an evening with him, that young gentleman, in the abjectness of his terror, consumed so many glasses of brandy-and-water for the purpose of qualifying himself for the interview, that his employer, on happening to summon him through the speaking-pipe, was answered by a defiance, through the same organ, to instant combat for nominal stakes. Mr. Ghirk was en-

titled to demand the assistance of any of the articled young gentlemen whenever he pleased, which was very seldom, for he held their legal powers to be in the extremest degree undeveloped. The "conveyancing" duties of the office, the marriage settlements, and the mortgages, and the wills (if the explanation should be serviceable to but one lady, I am amply repaid) was, however, really done by a most mysterious gentleman who resided in a dark cave in the Temple, and was called a conveyancing counsel. It was he who prepared, for a comparatively small remuneration, those mighty documents which were so awfully costly to the clients of the house. He again kept a hungry looking clerk, who copied the greater part of such matters from forms his master had by him, the latter merely revising them. And the clerk again was usually assisted by one or more gentlemen of education, who paid a hundred guineas each for leave to sit in the dark cave in the Temple, and copy out "precedents," which the clerk put into shape for his master, and his master revised for Mr. Ghirk, and Mr. Ghirk carried home to Mr. Molesworth, and Mr. Molesworth laid in parchment before the clients, and the clients signed and paid for. Not that the labours of the educated gentlemen were unrelieved by manly sports and necessary refreshment; for, when there was more than one of them (which the clerk hated should be the case), they

soothed their instructor's mind by fencing and pugilism in the outer chamber, especially when he had clients with him. And when there was only one, he usually balanced chairs until they fell down, performed gymnastics with the fire-irons, knocked at the window when pretty girls went by, and generally solaced his scholastic life. And whether the number were one or more, the hungry clerk was always being sent out for pale ale.

Mr. Limpet, "the gentleman who attends to the Chancery department," is a tall, dark, handsome man, slightly bald. He never speaks above his breath, but if he have a remonstrance or a reprimand to bestow, he does it in a short, severe, but courteous letter, of which he keeps a copy. He returns all salutations with great accuracy, but never joins in or even hears any joke which may be in the course of manufacture when he happens to come into the large office. He has a separate room to himself, with double doors, and it is understood that he would prefer that any one coming in should previously knock, a wish which has, at various times, occasioned unhappiness, and utterances of rebellious sentiment among inferior clerks suspected of democratic tendencies, and of going on Sundays to political lectures. A daring articled gentleman will sometimes insist on telling Mr. Limpet an anecdote, but its reception is very freezing, and the chances are that a quiet piece of

matter-of-fact, or chronology, on the hearer's part, demolishes the basis of the story, and the lively young man goes away discomfited. Mr. Limpet is perfectly master of his duty, but there is an impression that he submits to it as a sort of humiliation, having designed himself for a diplomatic situation. An occasional word, rather savouring of the protocol, will find its way into his letters, and when these are being copied into the letter-book before they go out, the copyist, especially if one of the more ignorant of the group, remarks, with intense sarcasm, "Lord Palmerston again to-day, a few."

The articled clerks are at present three, Mr. Molesworth having the two esquires whom law allows to the certificated knight, and Mr. Penridge having one only. Mr. Lobb and Mr. Chquerbent, by respective payments of one hundred and twenty pounds each to the revenue, obtained the privilege of paying three hundred guineas each to Mr. Molesworth, and for five years may lawfully copy as much of "the trash of an office" as they can bring themselves to do, at the end of which period they will be examined in the Law Society's Hall, and if not plucked, may pay to the revenue about fifty pounds more, and then will be let loose to revenge themselves on clients of their own. Mr. Lobb is very quiet, has a round white face, round eyes, and a round figure generally.

He takes great pains to learn the law, and would make progress, if his mind were not so bewildered by his financial operations. His father, a country clergyman of some property, allows him three pounds a-week, but stipulates that he shall keep an account of the way it is spent. So an average of two hours of Mr. Lobb's time every morning is spent in balancing his pocket-book, and the speculation "where that threepence went to," runs all day like a vein of copper through the gold mines of Fearne and Sugden. He has also another affliction,—he writes verses, and when a new penny periodical commences its five or seven weeks' life, Mr. Lobb, under the anagrammatic signature of "Bolb," is always thanked in the first notice to correspondents. On its publishing day he always contrives an excuse to be in Holywell Street rather before the first number can be folded, and will almost risk having "been wanted," than come back without the damp publication. He will be very melancholy all the afternoon if his verses have not appeared, but the following morning begins to count the days before the next number will come out. His poetry, like that of all beginners, is either expressive of the most abject misery, or the most heartless flippancy; but neither class of lyric precisely indicates Mr. Lobb's condition, as he eats a very hearty dinner at the Verulam every day at two,

and in the evening talks very rationally to the family with whom he lodges on Islington Green. But he has, in all probability, a common-place, honest career before him.

What Mr. Chequerbent has before him, except the blotting-paper, on which he is drawing most irreverent caricatures of the whole establishment, it may be difficult to say. He has no father, but, as he puts it, keeps a guardian, who, having articled him to Mr. Molesworth, and arranged for the quarterly payment of a rather handsome allowance to Mr. Chequerbent himself, seldom sees or hears of his ward, except when the latter has outrun the constable so desperately that the bailiff takes up the running. What Paul Chequerbent does with his money is one of the mysteries to his companions, and indeed to himself. He seldom has any in his pocket, is in debt to his tailor, his bootmaker, his bookseller, and even his landlord, besides being sorely tormented by small creditors, who make him as indignant as his good-nature will allow him to be, that they should pester him for such pitiful sums. Mr. Lobb offered to keep his accounts for him, one week, but speedily resigned his post of Chancellor to the Chequerbent Exchequer, scandalised, it was supposed, at the expenditure of secret service money, but he never would tell. Paul is a dark, jolly-looking, strong built young fellow, with a large nose, and

an incipient grin perpetually ready to expand into a hearty laugh, when his small but beautifully regular teeth will show to advantage. He affects a little of the sporting character and style, wears tiny gold horse-shoes for studs, and has a stick like the handle of a hunting-whip. But his reputation as a turf-man, which at one time was rather high in the office, was sadly damaged by an accident. Somebody suddenly asked him the meaning of a "handicap," and Mr. Limpet unluckily chanced to be in the room. Mr. Chequerbent, with some hesitation, explained that it was rather a technical expression, the meaning of which varied in different counties and at different races, and was not easily defined in a few words; but the inquirer knew what a jockey-cap was—well, it was not exactly that, but had to do with the colours of the riders, and depended on whether they were amateurs or regulars. Mr. Limpet looked up, heard this lucid solution very quietly to the end, and then said a few words, which caused Mr. Chequerbent to grow quite red, and offer him, rather loudly, a bet on the point. Mr. Limpet slightly bowed and retired, but Paul's incessant reiteration, for the next hour, that they saw Limpet was afraid to bet him, did not work in a very reactionary manner, and Paul had hardly recovered his position up to the date of the last Derby. His brilliant account of that great national event, however, in every

detail of which he was utterly wrong, except as to the fact that *Epaminondas* was first and *Bung* second, did him as much service as a dashing speech in the House does to a politician of tainted character.

The third articled young gentleman, Mr. Carlyon, is nearly through his term of years. Very little is known about him in the office, except that his friends are understood to reside abroad, and that he has a small set of chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Tall, slight, and with well cut features, rather of the Southern than the Saxon type, he may already be called a distinguished-looking person, and probably will become more so, as the lines of his face deepen, and the expression, now a little listless, hardens into gravity. The face is full of intellect, and the smile, when it comes, has scarcely so little of sarcasm in it, as the smile of one whose antecedents have been happy, should hold at that age. He is perfectly courteous to every one, but makes no advances, and invites none. He has, in conversation, shown himself to be a scholar; and Mr. Lobb, with a laudable wish that his next poem in the "Weekly Sampler of Song and Stitch," should be *sans reproche*, has requested his perusal of the lines. Mr. Carlyon has read them, has suggested, that "from van to rear" is hardly a recognised mode of describing a scene on board ship—has hinted that there are some impediments

to the coupling “dawning” and “morning” in wedlock, and has returned the poem as otherwise unobjectionable. Lobb will not show him any more lyrics. Carlyon has evinced some acquaintance with theatrical matters, and Mr. Chequerbent having obtained an order, has particularly requested Carlyon to accompany him to the Hay-market. Carlyon has gone with him, and has given him supper at Lincoln’s Inn Fields afterwards, and has even presented him with an autograph of Mr. Macready, on hearing Paul express a desire to have one; yet Chequerbent does not seem to care about much more of Carlyon’s companionship. It was rather thought in the office that Mr. Limpet and Mr. Carlyon would suit one another, though the latter is so much more affable than the former. It is not so. Indeed, when the notion current touching Limpet’s diplomatic ambition was mentioned to Carlyon, the latter showed some little curiosity, and certainly sought two or three opportunities of speaking to Limpet. But after these interviews, which were only on the business of the establishment, there was no effort on either side to improve the acquaintance. Carlyon was sometimes appealed to for an opinion on Mr. Limpet’s protocol phraseology, but he seldom said more than that the words were perfectly legitimate, but that perhaps shorter ones would have been as explicit. Of Mr. Penkridge,

to whom he was nominally bound, Carlyon saw little. Mr. Penkridge was a timid kind of man, of considerable fortune, whose chief occupation and enjoyment was a menagerie of wild animals, which he kept at Sydenham, and on which he spent terrible sums, besides frightening himself about the beasts in the most dreadful manner at least twice a-week. But Mr. Molesworth, who bore the real weight of the business, contrived that Carlyon, had he been inclined to waste his time, should have no chance of doing so. A man of the world, and knowing his man, Molesworth did not heap business around the young lawyer in a way which should make him feel that he was to drudge. He did so with Lobb, and Lobb worked with scarce a murmur. He would have done so with Chequerbent (perhaps softening him with an occasional invitation to Mr. Molesworth's hospitable house), but he found it was less trouble to neglect than to employ one who needed so much looking after. But he quietly admitted Carlyon into some confidences of importance, and having thus taken a sort of guarantee for the young man's co-operation, Molesworth, without displaying any such intention, made it clear to Carlyon, that to make that co-operation available, he must both study at his law-books and work at his desk. And Carlyon did both, to an extent which Molesworth was quite the man to appreciate, and some-

times to applaud. Probably not many solicitors pay so much attention to the characters of the young men who buy seats in their offices, but Mr. Molesworth found his account in obtaining a first-rate officer. Keen, self-composed, and persevering, Carlyon, aided by the training incident to the practical study of his profession, speedily became qualified for entry, with perhaps more than average chances, for the great race of life.

Perhaps it is not necessary to say much of the other occupants of Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge's horse-hair stools. There was Mr. Linnery, who kept the books of the house, and sorely worried Mr. Chequerbent for not keeping up his attendance-book, and transcribing its costs into their vellum volume. He made execrable puns, but was otherwise harmless. There was, also, Mr. Ratchet, whose business it was to make himself generally useful, and who had an instinctive knowledge when there was likely to be a press of work, upon which occasions he invariably absented himself, sending word that either he, or his wife, or one of seven sallow sandy sulky children, whom they were supposed to have reared for the express purpose of excuses, was lying at the point of death. The family, however, kept steadily at nine for many a year. Penultimately, there was Mr. Maunder, who was also engaged to do what he was bid. He wrote a beautiful hand,

borrowed money from every new clerk, and was rather supposed to be an atheist, because he never swore, and because he had been detected in reading Voltaire's *Charles XII.* Finally, there was a young assistant named Spott, an undesirable name where its owner's companions are facetious. He was the general message and errand boy, and was believed to be in more of Mr. Chequerbent's secrets than was consistent with the dignity an articled clerk should wear in transactions with his subordinates.

Such was the phalanx with which Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge made war upon society. Its members have been described at some length, because certain of them will be heard of again, and one of them designs to claim no small part in the world's comedy of errors.

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARATIONS; AND MR. CHEQUERBENT'S ILL LUCK.

IT is a quarter past ten, and Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge's office is full and busy. Blotting paper is being adjusted, bundles of law documents are being enfranchised from the restrictions of red tape, and Spott is being abused on all sides for having filled ink-stands too full, or not having filled them at all, or spilled the ink in the process, besides receiving interlocutory reprimands for his general deficiencies of character, manners, and principles; all of which Mr. Spott receives with great meekness, and even cheerfulness, knowing that he is rather liked by the gentlemen, and that one or other of them is always doing him some good turn, and aiding him in his efforts for the benefit of the establishment at home, presided over by his mother, an indomitable and implacable laundress.

“Make up that fire, Spott, and then get away from it, will you,” observes Mr. Chequerbent; “these February mornings make one shiver, don't they, Mr. Carlyon?”

"Fever month, too," replies Carlyon, "according to the Romans."

"The Romans were asses," returns Mr. Chequerbent.

A single blow from a little hammer here fell upon a small bell in a corner of the room, close to the ceiling.

"Go to the pipe, somebody," cries Mr. Lobb; "Mr. Molesworth's come."

Mr. Chequerbent, as nearest, pulled down a slide which covered the orifice of a small hole in the wall (like the large end of a telescope) and shouted up it—

"Sir!"

"Is Mr. Lobb there?"

"Are you in or out, Lobb?" asks Mr. Chequerbent, in a lower tone.

"Just gone out, I shall be in directly, almost. Chancery Lane," replies Lobb, hurriedly.

"Mr. Lobb is gone down the Lane, sir, for a short time—I think to the Master's office," Mr. Chequerbent states, up the pipe. Mr. Chequerbent hears a click at the other end of the pipe, which indicates that communication is cut off for the present.

"I know what he wants," remarks Mr. Lobb; "I sat up till past eleven copying it, but it is not half done yet."

"You said you were going to an Orrery, or

some such scene of frantic dissipation, Lobb," replies Mr. Chequerbent.

"So I was, and I had got tickets for myself and the Miss Dingles, my landlady's daughters, and I promised myself a delightful evening, but I was obliged to give it up, to go on with this statement."

"Well, they are deuced plain girls, those Dingles," observes the worldly Chequerbent; "I don't know that there would be any great fun in taking them to see a lot of stupid transparencies, and to hear a hurdy-gurdy in a blanket, the performance enlivened by quotations from *Paradise Lost*."

"They are very intelligent girls," answers Mr. Lobb, "and converse very rationally on all subjects."

"So they ought," says the reckless Chequerbent, "considering their ugliness. By Jove, if an ugly girl doesn't talk out-and-out well, she ought to be prosecuted for being alive."

The hammer again.

"Is Mr. Linnery there?"

"Yes, sir," answers Mr. Chequerbent instantly, as Mr. Linnery never ventures to take any liberties with his employers.

"Ask him to step up."

And Mr. Linnery, carefully locking his desk, and pocketing his bundle of keys, with a look at

Mr. Chequerbent, which intimates that it is for his sake that this precaution is taken, goes out.

"He can't forget the fly-paper," says Paul, laughing.

"He could forgive it, and that was more," observes Mr. Carlyon.

"Pooh, anybody can forgive," replies Mr. Chequerbent; "you don't understand metaphysics. Forgiving is a mere act of the will—if a man likes to do it, he can."

"Can he?" asks Mr. Carlyon, thoughtfully. "Well, I hope you will always find it so."

There was a knock at the street-door, and a pull at the trigger, one of whose ropes and rings hung before each clerk, released the catch. Paul looked uneasily at the oval hole in the office-door. A stout-built, not over clean looking man, entered, and Paul managed to see that he was a stranger, before the others could quite make out the group.

"Good morning, gents," said the new arrival. "Is Mr. Chequerbent here?"

Nobody seemed inclined to reply, and Mr. Chequerbent himself stepped forward.

"No," he said, "Mr. Chequerbent is *not* here. Will you leave any message for him?"

"Oh!" said the other, "then you expect him in soon. I don't know but I'd as good as wait for him."

"Mr. Chequerbent is gone to Westminster,"

said Paul, "and thence he is going—where did he say, Mr. Lobb?"

"I—I—don't know," mumbled Mr. Lobb, trying to restrain his laughter. "Brompton, or somewhere."

"Brompton or somewhere; yes," said Paul, turning to the stranger, "those are the addresses he mentioned, so you know best whether you would like to wait. If you would," he added, "there's a chair."

This last piece of coolness settled the matter. But for it, the stranger, who had noticed Mr. Lobb's mirth, would have pursued his interrogations; but as Chequerbent carelessly pointed to the chair, and lounged away to the fire, the other said,

"Well, then, I'll look in another day."

"Any name?" asked Paul, carelessly.

"Smith," said the man, "but he wouldn't know it."

"Very well, Mr. Smith," said Paul; "Mr. Spott, write down that Mr. Smith called to see Mr. Chequerbent, and mind Mr. Chequerbent is made aware of it when he comes in."

"Yes, sir," said Spott, gravely.

The stranger went out, the office-door slammed, and then the outside door. As the latter clashed and fastened, Mr. Paul Chequerbent uttered a victorious war-whoop, snatched a very tall stool from

under Mr. Spott, bringing that young gentleman to the ground, and then placing the tottering piece of furniture in the middle of the room, he seized a large ruler, and the cover of the coal-box, and, struggling up into a standing position on the stool, he struck a classic sword and shield attitude.

"Paul Chequerbent," he shouted, "as he appeared, defying his creditor."

"And praps Mr. Paul Chequerbent will appear to *this*," said a voice behind him. It was the stranger, holding the door in one hand, and a strip of printed paper in the other. The writ-server had evidently practised a *ruse*—still suspicious of the answer of the clerks, and of Lobb's laughter, he had gone out, banged both doors, but crouched down between them, to listen to the conversation which was to follow his supposed *exit*.

"I thought as much, somehow," said the stranger, with a grin; "but you was preshus cheeky, master, you was; and if I hadn't a thought of the double, you'd a done me. Any ways, I suppose you'll stand a trifle for the laugh?"

"The laugh," said Paul, considerably disconcerted; "I don't think this is the proper way of doing business."

"Nor do I, Mr. Chequerbent," said a grave voice, as Mr. Molesworth himself entered from another door. "A little mad, I think."

And the solicitor passed on to Carlyon's desk, while Paul, looking exceedingly red and foolish, descended from his elevation, not so easily however but that, to save the ricketty stool from toppling over, he was compelled to drop the lid of the coal-box, and its clatter attracted another look from Mr. Molesworth, which just enabled that gentleman to see the writ thrust into Mr. Chequerbent's hand. Paul then made a hasty retreat into some mystic washing-room, and there dwelt in darkness until his employer had disappeared.

The solicitor was equipped for a walk, and you could see little of his face between his ample hat and the turned-up collar of his great-coat. A pair of searching grey eyes, and a prominent nose, reddened by a raw morning, were all that could be made out.

"Give me your arm down to the Strand, Mr. Carlyon," said he; "I want to speak to you. How quickly can you prepare yourself for a journey into the West of England?"

"Ten minutes to get to my place—five to pack a carpet-bag," said Carlyon, quietly, and without any affectation of smartness,—"and I am at your service."

"No, no, you are to have a little more breathing time than that. Besides, you will have a companion, perhaps a lady; I am not sure.

Only be ready, and we'll send to your chambers. Oh, Mr. Lobb, I called for you, and was told you were out."

"Out, sir—no, sir, I have not been out since I signed the book on arriving," said Lobb, flurriedly.

"Who answered me, then?"

"I think it was Mr. Chequerbent, sir," said Mr. Ratchet, at whom the grey eyes seemed to be directed.

Paul heard the words in the darkness of his den.

"Some mistake," said Mr. Carlyon, "evidently. Mr. Chequerbent is usually so very careful in what he says about any one being out or in."

The interposition saved Paul, or perhaps Mr. Molesworth did not think the question worth pursuing. He intimated to Mr. Lobb that he had hoped to have found the statement complete and on his desk when he came, though to achieve this poor Lobb must have sat up good part of the night,—and he had paid three hundred guineas, too, for leave to sit upon that horschair. Mr. Molesworth just glanced round over each clerk's shoulder, told Mr. Ratchet he was glad to find he was nearly through that settlement, which he was sick of seeing about, reproved Mr. Mauder for not keeping his papers in better order, told Mr. Linnery he should have something to say to him about the books, and desired him to be an hour

earlier next morning for that purpose ; and lastly, as Spott's eyes kept following him round the room, he demanded why, if there was nothing for that boy to do, he did not write new labels for the old bundles of papers, and thus improve his mind and his handwriting, and try to do justice to the people who employed him, and be a comfort and a credit to his bereaved mother. And having thus brought all the horses up to the collar, he added, in a good-natured tone, that they had better keep up good fires, for it was not weather to catch cold : and then went out with Carlyon.

“ The fact is,” said Mr. Molesworth, “ that Wilmslow, who, between ourselves, is not a bit wiser than he ought to be, insists on going down directly and taking possession of Aspen Court. Now, as you did so much in making out the title, and laying the basis for the proceedings which gave him the place, it is fair that you should see the installation. So go down. You ’ll be bored with him, but Mrs. Tracy ’s a dear, sweet woman, and I don ’t know whether you like children, but the three girls are something better than pretty. And you ought to see Aspen Court.”

CHAPTER V.

WILMSLOW OF ASPEN, AND JANE HIS WIFE.

“NOT a bit wiser than he ought to be.” Such was Mr. Molesworth’s estimate of Mr. Wilmslow. “Wilmslow”—as he could now write himself—“of Aspen Court.” It sounded moderate, but then Molesworth was a lawyer, and had been for thirty years in the habit of selling his opinions at prices varying from three-and-fourpence upwards. And people who sell opinions, like people who sell various other articles, weigh them carefully, and seldom give overweight. Bernard Carlyon, who had privately formed his own estimate of the same fortunate personage, would probably have put the matter a little more strongly, but he, of course, was not young enough to abuse the clients of the house to the kindly-natured person to whom they were none the less dear for their faults and follies. But I may be as frank in telling all I know about Mr. Wilmslow as is consistent with propriety, and I am sorry to be obliged to append this little qualification, but there are some passages in the life of most men, not to say most guardsmen, which nobody would presume to write about, except in

the newspaper your daughters air for you before you come down to breakfast.

Lord Ambergate and the other statesmen at the club told us something of Wilmslow's history, with the charitable tone and cordial feeling with which, very likely this afternoon, or perhaps tomorrow, just as it happens, some other improvised committee of public safety, lounging at that or some other club, will discuss the history of Lord Ambergate, or Acton Calveley, or Tom Crowsfoot. Very well informed fellows all of them, and men who know the world, and are not to be humbugged, and all that sort of thing. But do they think, like Job's friends, that they alone are the people, and that wisdom shall die with them? Very likely Lord Malachite (who spoke against time last night, and was in a rage this morning because the reporters, who knew perfectly well what he was about, had not wasted much valuable space on his platitudes) is at this minute telling Slangley Barker, the eminent diner-out, that Ambergate cannot raise any more money, and, in despair, has inhumanly threatened his father, that, if he will not pay his debts, he will rat, and spoil the poor old Earl's darling hope of getting rid of four of the pearls and pyramids in his coronet. And Sir Allan Bilberry joins them, and, after some preliminary cackle about the state of his own health, and the hideous casualty—shipwreck of

emigrants—in to-day's "Times," or something else which nobody cares about, introduces another topic which makes them draw closer to him and listen. Perhaps he is only saying that Sir Frederic Belt's wife is wild with mortification at finding that Freddy has again deceived her, and that he still goes to a pretty little house in St. John's Wood, and has sent two cream-coloured ponies, with silver harness, there, during the past week. How they look at one another, and laugh at the fun ! Sir Allan would not laugh, perhaps, if he knew what Slangley Barker said yesterday night at a dinner in Park Lane about that gallant officer's eminent services *after* an action, or his suggestion that he should be raised to the peerage as Lord Poultice. And Slangley Barker himself might not talk quite so loud if he knew that everybody in the club, waiters included, was perfectly well aware that he spent his hours, from last Saturday night but one, to the following Monday morning, in availing himself of certain Hebrew hospitalities in Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, which were in a manner forced upon him as he was leaving his chambers in the Temple, and only terminated by an arrangement which has locked up all his diamond studs and silver forks in an iron safe, with a little square ticket pinned to the parcel. Nor would Lord Malachite, who, having recovered from his rage, looks the personation of good humour,

which he is, laugh quite so heartily at poor Lady Belt's grievances, if Acton Calveley, who has just come in, were to tell him what he told Doddy Butt on the stairs, namely, that Malachite's own beautiful wife was suspected of encouraging that remarkable politician's constant presence at the House, and absence from his own, for a reason which, if he knew it, might induce him to sympathise with Lady Freddy. Tiresias, or the Chevalier d'Eon, might be a competent witness as to whether women watch as vigilantly and sedulously over one another's fortunes and morals as men do, but until some such evidence appears, there seems no reason for believing that they equal us. We may be called triflers, but we will make answer out of Paley, and hold that nothing is a trifle that tends to the harmless gratification of many, and anybody who will not be convinced by Paley, is a mere infidel, and unfit to be argued with.

But we will put Henry Wilmslow's history into a little clearer form than was employed by his friends at the club. Had the matter rested with me, I would have given gentle, good Jane Tracy a different husband, and dear Emma, Kate, and Amy Wilmslow another kind of father. *Nascitur, non fit*, and we must make the best of him, and not be too hard. Superfine Tom Crowsfoot condemned him in his superfine way, but it was not for any cause which merited such utter condemna-

tion, but because he was one of the style of men whom Tom detests. Mr. Crowsfoot has all his life been quietly wicked, not because wickedness is wrong, but because quietness is gentlemanly. Wilmslow was noisily wicked, but then he was noisy in everything. If he shut a book--to be sure it was seldom he had that trouble, but at any rate it was always very soon after he opened one—he shut it with a bang. If he stormed the gentle heart of a *coryphée*, he did not do it, like Tom Crowsfoot, *moyennant* a bracelet and a plenipotentiary, but blundered about the dark wings of the Opera-house at rehearsal-time, and kept his great stamping horses pawing the Haymarket pavement opposite the stage-door, while his arms and motto edified the world at large. Humbug as he was, his laugh was as hearty as if he meant laughter, and his loud voice rang out over other voices, as if he had not a care or a fear in the world, at a time when his debts had made him so nervous that the most harmless lounger had but to wait at a corner to be instantly transformed, in Wilmslow's apprehensions, into a sheriff's officer bent on capturing him. It was his organization that made him noisy, and laid him open to Tom Crowsfoot's criticism. We will not take him at Tom's hostile valuation.

Henry Wilmslow was of an old family—the heralds gave him Hastings, but that they always

think a man has a right to who can prove Bosworth, where unquestionably a Wilmslow laid lance for the Boar. But the family did not keep itself respectable, and we find it robbing under Elizabeth, and jobbing under Anne, and decidedly suffering no particular martyrdom for its principles in the interim. But if Hastings were a myth, and a Wilmslow did not charge the British army under William Rex the Conqueror, he assuredly did under William Pitt the Heaven-born, and charged it to such an extent, in the capacity of a contractor, that he speedily realized a handsome fortune. This, Henry Wilmslow would have inherited, but unhappily for him, his revered parent, in the decline of his life, became startled at the evil means he had adopted in accumulating his gains, and sought spiritual consolation. Not, however, in the Church of England, or his fortune might have been spared. There unluckily intervened traditions of regimental chaplains, of whom, in his younger days, he had known two or three specimens, disgraceful to a body of which, however, they were not, even then, characteristic. Old Samuel Wilmslow, whose shrewdness now only partially helped him, insisted on regarding one poor tipsy creature, known in his regiment as the Reverend Cherry Bounce, and whose conversation was the commination service, (undiluted, but with an extended social range,) as a

type of the clerical order. He paid dearly for his ignorant wilfulness, for having sought the counsel of a clever sectarian preacher, whose talents in his time achieved as much for his uncouthly-named sect as any member of the vaunted Order of Jesus ever effected for the Society, old Wilmslow's senses were first frightened out of him by the ultra-Calvinistic horrors his adviser judiciously conjured up,—next, he was completely alienated and isolated from his family,—and, finally, the bulk of his money was handed over—not bequeathed, the astute doctrinarians being up to the doctrine of mortmain—for the building and endowing meeting-houses for the "connexion" of which his theological friend was a shining light. So went the spoils of the British army, and the elder Wilmslow did not long survive their surrender.

In some Spanish play, a character observes, "The father sacrificed his property for his religion—the logical consequence is that the son has neither property nor religion." This would most likely have been Henry Wilmslow's case, although he had been withdrawn from Eton (where he had been sent in his parent's unconverted days) and, at the instance of old Mr. Wilmslow's religious adviser, had been removed from the sports of the Brocas, with a view to his being apprenticed to a pious woolstapler of the

"connexion." But woman, who always mixes herself up for some good purpose in the affairs of this life, intervened. An old maiden sister of the ex-contractor, whom the high-principled and high-church lady had detested all his life, first for his swindling, and secondly, for his schism, took the Etonian out of the wool and bought him a commission in the Guards. Miss Alreda Wilmslow did more—she made him a handsome allowance, which she soon had to pay at least three times over, per annum; and notwithstanding this, she left the young officer all her remaining money. If she did this as much from dislike of her brother as from love of her nephew, the high-church lady was still right, for old Wilmslow deserved to be disliked, and young Wilmslow did not deserve to be loved.

Miss Alreda's money did not last Captain Henry very long, but he enjoyed himself while it endured, and while, after it was actually gone, one deluded discounter retained the curious faith in its ghost which will at times avengingly beset those who ought best to know how completely a man is ruined. Wilmslow had inherited something of his father's shrewd, coarse nature, and could at times be bitterly hard, especially when there was a choice between withholding payment of a just debt, and spending the money on some unrighteous pleasure. At such

a crisis he was proof against any pleadings, and took spiteful delight in feeling his sovereigns between his finger and thumb in his pocket, while solemnly swearing to a distressed tradesman that he did not that day know where to turn for five shillings, though he should be in ample funds next week. And then, having, as he imagined, deluded his creditor, he would go away and be himself deluded, slightly more successfully, by some Mademoiselle Hélène or Juliette, whose poor little *meubles* had that morning been seized by a cruel landlord, whom *son bon petit Henri* had to pay out; and with whom (the barbarous wretch being, most likely, her husband or brother) she shared the spoil as soon as the captain had gone too far down stairs to hear them laugh. Then he went to Paris,—he talked French, by the way, with a very pure and bold English accent, like some of his betters,—and as he combined a couple of tastes which do not harmonize advantageously for the pocket, especially in France, namely, playing high and drinking hard, he scarcely could be said to visit the Continent for retrenchment. At home his rooms in Half-moon Street were open to all comers in the days of his prosperity, and even when it became expedient to see who knocked, as it soon did, he still held hospitable orgy for any one who had no claim upon him. But it was a queer set that

the captain liked to have about him,—a bad set, in fact,—I do not mean on the mere score of its members being remarkably good-for-nothing,—a qualification which would suit some very good sets we all know,—but in point of taste. He liked what is called the “artist-world,” but then he was incapable of comprehending either art or its nobler professors, and patronised any rattling scampish *vaurien*—if foreign, so much the better—who dressed like a Guy, told profane or immoral anecdotes, or both, sketched a caricature, blew a bugle, or modelled a *statuette*. A scamp of this sort, especially if he wore a moustache, smoked cigars all the morning, and could bang a terrific piano-forte accompaniment to songs of the *Quartier Latin*, sung as they sing in French *vaudevilles* (I mean abominably), was dear to whatever did duty for heart in Henry Wilmslow. Sometimes he would get a number of these people together, with ladies who dressed very charmingly, but whom one would not have otherwise proposed as models, except to Mr. Frost or to Mr. Macrise, and then, what with champagne and innocent *bardinage*, singing, and cigar-smoke (which the ladies were good enough not to mind at all, and, indeed, rather to like, and sometimes to make), the evening glided very pleasantly into night, and the night into morning. And Wilmslow was happy, contributing his wine, his loud laugh, and

sometimes his bad joke to the happiness of his respectable friends. These were not play nights, —the artists of Wilmslow's set have not much to lose,—and if cards came out it was chiefly for conjuring or telling fortunes, or to show the trick by which the German Baron Sosterkite ruined young Loppy at Baden-Baden, and drove that excitable youth to shoot himself in the garden at the hotel. All this, and perhaps a little *écarté*, that time, which is short, might not be quite unimproved, was comparatively economical. But Wilmslow did play, in England as well as in France, and I am not quite sure in which he was most cheated. Certainly good Aunt Albreda's money did go into quarters which, could she have known them, would have astonished her, though she had often declared that after the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the letting dreadful Dissenters into a Christian Parliament, nothing could ever astonish her, good old thing, again.

This was Henry Wilmslow for the years he was first on town. And as he is soon going to be married, it ought to be said that though he had lived hard, he had preserved his good looks. He was a tall, showy, rather effective looking man, with black hair and black whiskers, both redundant. He trained his hair with great care, and liked to show a broad shiny wedge thereof, rising from the

parting, and crossing his head, flanked by a mass of neat little curls. He wears a wig of the same hue and fashion at the period of our story, but when Jane Tracy accepted him, she accepted the real thing. He always overdressed, and loved pins, and studs, and rings, of which at one time he had a stock that would have sufficed an opera singer's private life, but they all gradually went away, for reasons, except some Palais-Royal rubbish, which competent judges declined to deem security for the little impromptu mortgages which Wilmslow occasionally negotiated. In short, he liked to be fine, but it did not occur to him, as to Benedick, that to go the finer, he must live a bachelor. On the contrary, we all know for what men of his class consider respectable women, with money, were created. Wilmslow early and easily made up such mind as he had, that when he should have gamed, and drunk, and smoked, and lounged, and done a few other things, until he was satiated, and nearly all his money should have gone, he would bestow himself upon some handsome girl—widow, if you like, he did not mind—with a fortune, which he could do what he liked with. Not that he proposed in that case to go on quite in the old way—a married man can hardly do that; besides, he should begin to be bored by the old set. He would have a house in town, and a place in the country, and occasionally be seen out with Mrs.

Wilmslow—Lady Laura or Lady Clara Wilmslow, if the money happened to come with a title—and, on the whole, he would be quiet, but his wife must not worry him, or pry into his goings on. That was settled. A good many good-looking men have arrived at the same settlement, and, at this minute, are going through the same preparatory process.

Fortune often helps us, but seldom in the way we expect. Henry Wilmslow fully intended to slide pleasantly from his bachelor state into his wedded life. He thought it most likely that the thing would happen naturally enough. He occasionally went to parties, visited country-houses to shoot, looked into opera-boxes. He felt very certain that either in a quadrille, or at a breakfast-table, or during an *entr'acte*, he should see the right woman, and what was of more consequence, the right woman would see him. The rest was matter-of-course, though the courtship business might be a bit of a bore—however, in good society, people do not “keep company,” and it would not last long. Mr. Molesworth has already remarked that Mr. Wilmslow of Aspen Court, at fifty, was not a bit wiser than he ought to be—the supererogatory wisdom could hardly be expected in Captain Wilmslow, of the Guards, at thirty.

Well, Wilmslow deserved his good fortune about

as little as most young gentlemen. I suppose we shall agree as to that. He had flung Aunt Albreda's money away, after the manner of the prodigal son of the East, with such additional wickedness as civilization teaches the prodigal sons of the West. He was a *roué*—I would say, rake, which is quite as good a word, but I am told young ladies allege that they have been raking, bless them, when their worst crime has been going to several parties, and prolonging the after-supper dances until three o'clock. I want a word that has no innocence within scent of it, and I do not want to call hard names. So we will keep to the French word, which, rightly understood, reeks sufficiently for our purpose. Henry Wilmslow was a *roué*—and one of the vulgar school. And this is the gentleman who expected the world to be so arranged, that a fresh, modest, beautiful, loving woman was to throw her purse at his feet, and herself into his arms, and be his slave and comforter for the rest of his life. And what is more—it happened. The Parcæ, kinder to him than he could be even to himself, determined to give him another chance.

It came, however, when he was in fear and trembling, and thinking of anything rather than affection and consolation. All Aunt Albreda's money was gone. He had sold his commission, and spent the produce. No more bills to be

done. Mr. Shandon, the Christian usurer, would not speak to him. Mr. Issachar, the Jewish usurer, would not see him. Pactolus has ebbed quite out when these marks are visible. Actions, long since pressed to judgment, started up grim on all sides, and it was of no use Wilmslow's swaggering, now, and saying that the matter was in his lawyer's hands, those legal extremities having been washed of him and his concerns when it was found that he neither would nor could carry out any arrangement with a single creditor. He had long since exhausted the pockets of his friends, so far as they chose to exhaust them—the process was shorter than Henry could have imagined when in full flush, and when he had only to say he had no money about him, to hear a hasty "*Moy dear fellow!*" and feel a friend's purse put into his hand. Besides, men began to look grave at his jokes, and even to hint that though they were not straight-laced, heaven forbid! there *were* certain outward proprieties; and he began to be left out of parties; and drags, on which he had often shouted and blown horns, were found to have their numbers made up for the race or the pic-nic. More signs, and donkey as, in some respects, Henry Wilmslow was, he could not help seeing that he was "*going to the bad.*" He was left, like Sir Walter Amyott, "*alone with the pale ghosts of his dead joys,*" and

what was worse, the ghosts began to look remarkably like bailiffs.

Yet, one morning, as he was sadly shaving in his single, ugly, little misshapen room, in one of the streets near St. James's Square (for he had long since been obliged to evacuate his position in Half-moon Street, not entirely without loss of baggage), and thinking what an utter mistake the world was, and why they brought him lukewarm water to shave with, and what a pity it was he had not gone to more parties, and breakfasts, and boxes, and where the deuce he should dine, for he had but seventeen-and-sixpence (and he owed a washing-bill, and the woman was waiting down stairs, and *would* wait till he came down), and what that scoundrel meant by parading opposite and looking up at his window—it was very suspicious—and how impertinent the boot-maker in Piccadilly had been yesterday, when he tried to give him an order—I say, while all these things were passing through the miserable brain of poor Wilmslow, one of the best creatures in the world was preparing herself expressly for him, though she did not know it. Look at him. Look at that shallow, forlorn-looking face, with the moustache, which he has allowed to grow, making it still more pensive. See how slowly and sulkily he is putting on that dressing-gown, once gaudy, but now dingy. And now he lights a cigar, which

does not draw well, and he is going to dash it away, as in other days, but remembers that it cost threepence, which is money, and pricks it viciously with a Palais-Royal shirt-pin—yes, now the smoke comes out well. And now he takes up his poor balance of silver, and counts out the nine and sixpence for the washerwoman, and is in a shudder because one of the half-crowns looks bad; however, he will try to make the woman take it in the dark passage, and that leaves him eight shillings, and they look wretchedly few—but the abominable woman will not go, that is certain, and so down he goes to pay her. There is a visage of melancholy.

If he only knew how pretty Jane Tracy is looking, while in the well-appointed bed-room, in Mr. Molesworth's house, then in Bedford Row (where she has been staying on a visit to Mrs. Molesworth), she is arranging her bright hair before the glass. What a rich brown that hair is, and what a quantity she has, and yet how easily and well she manages it, laying it right and left into great shiny folds, and twisting the remainder into a mystic coronal, the secret of which is known but to herself and those giraffe hair-pins. And how fresh she looks, and healthy, and English. Her figure is rather full, and if all were not so beautifully rounded, (especially those arms, which you can see, as Miss Tracy's hands are

above her head, and the loose sleeves of the morning-dress slip back) you might almost be an ungrateful wretch, and think her too plump. But her hands are so white and small, and her foot—well, you cannot see that, but there stands a pair of tiny shoes on that chair, you can see them, and judge of what can be put into them. Jane is not called beautiful, though sometimes, when her face lights up with merriment—it is always full of kindness—and her blue eyes sparkle, and her laugh rings so pleasantly—one feels a great contempt for mere nomenclature, and if she is not to be called beautiful, you may keep your adjectives for your dolls in the Annuals. And did you ever see a head more gracefully put on? Look, as she turns to answer Mrs. Molesworth, who is knocking at the door, to ask her to come down to lunch. And hear the cheerful voice that says, “In *one* minute, dear.”

Jane Wilmslow’s voice is not so cheerful now, for I have written of nearly twenty years ago. She is the mother of three daughters, whose father is that sallow ex-officer coming up from paying the washerwoman. If he only knew the *coup* he will make in a few hours.

He did make it, and in quite as simple a way as any which he had proposed to himself in his days of glory. With some vague notion of asking Mr. Molesworth (whose acquaintance he had

made in the opera-box of the then manager of the King's Theatre—the fact was, that Molesworth was suing the latter, and (remarkably friendly) for advice as to his affairs, he called in Bedford Row, and was asked to dinner. Whereby did Henry Wilmslow not only save his eight shillings, but did so fascinate Miss Jane Tracy—how, I never could understand,—that the result was matrimony. When this fact is arrived at, it seems waste of time to talk about the motives which produced it. Even Tom Crowsfoot has admitted that Wilmslow was about as pleasant a person as a noisy officer in debt can be, and his loud manner may have imposed on Jane, who, being herself very guileless, may have taken Henry's clamour for the frank utterances of a cheerful, honest fellow. He had been a Guardsman, too; and Jane had not lived much in the world, and had little superstitions, perhaps, about officers; and then—I really do not like to write it—she was so good, and her goodness made it impossible that the country girl should at all comprehend Wilmslow's real character; but Molesworth had said that the captain had been “rather too gay,” and it is my solemn belief that these words did no harm to the captain's suit. At any rate he wooed thrivingly, and Jane married him.

Mr. Molesworth could have prevented this, at least in the earlier part of the courtship; later, I

am not so sure about it; but he did not choose to prevent it. Miss Tracy was his client, and his friend, but he would do nothing to keep her out of the arms of that scamp. Yet *he* knew all about Wilmslow, and about a good many other people of the Wilmslow kind. A manager of an opera-house knows as much as most men, and can tell a good deal to a confidential adviser who is supposed to be suing him. Besides, Molesworth had other means of ascertaining the precise social, moral, and pecuniary position of Jane's lover. That he did ascertain it, most accurately, there is no doubt at all; and having done so, he not only did not warn Jane Tracy of her peril, but he facilitated Wilmslow's progress in his suit. He lent Henry money, not much, but enough to keep him presentable, and he guaranteed the rent of some decent apartments for him. I think, too, that he met two or three men in Chancery Lane, and said something to them which prevented Henry Wilmslow from being driven to study racquets in seclusion and Southwark. He was always making Henry dine in Bedford Row, but, somehow, Molesworth contrived to be very careful not to ask any valued client to meet him; and it was observed that very little wine was drunk after the ladies had withdrawn, upon every occasion when Wilmslow was present. One might think Molesworth had determined that

the gallant ex-captain should not spoil his own game.

Why Molesworth took this course may appear by-and-by; at present we have only to do with poor Miss Tracy.

She married Wilmslow, and soon found out what was meant by a man's having been too gay. Poor dear, good Jane! She struggled with all a woman's noble obstinacy against her conviction that her husband was a good-for-nothing fellow, but the conviction was too strong for her. I shall not annoy you by describing the series of levities, wickednesses, and insults by which Wilmslow forced that conviction upon her. I have shown what he was in his bachelor days, and I would not have dwelt upon that part of the picture as I did, but that it was necessary to understand the man, and but that by explaining his nature while its developments had somewhat more extenuation, and somewhat less offensiveness, we might escape from delineating vice and folly when they had darkened into crime and cruelty. Her fifteen hundred a year was speedily squandered, with the exception of two hundred, which Molesworth had thought proper to secure, and to secure in a way which enabled him to defy all Henry's attempts to get at the principal, and even to resist poor Jane's entreaties, when her husband had compelled the poor girl to ask that this little fund might be

given up to him. The rest went as Aunt Alreda's allowance first, and then her legacy had gone, and as the commission money had gone, and every other sum that Wilmslow could lay hands on had gone. The hardships, privations, and humiliations to which a vicious spendthrift's wife is exposed, came heavily on poor Jane Wilmslow. Sometimes more heavily than she could well bear; for she never had the consolation of being loved, to arm her against all this world's storms, and to be her assurance of another world's peace. And, at last, though not without a desperate resistance on the poor woman's part, her husband took from her the power of loving him. All was at length over between them, except the marriage link, and Jane's never weakened sense of duty. But there was another love, which the vain, and vicious, and hardening man could not disturb or destroy. They had three children, girls, born in the earliest years of their marriage. Jane never had any more. To these children she became the angel which she would have been to their father, had his nature permitted it. To these children she devoted herself with an unvarying and sedulous affection, which neither his ridicule nor his threats ever turned aside from its holy course. She could tremble away from his taunting presence, and cry her very heart out beside her bed, but when she rose

from her knees it was to go to the cot, or assist in the lesson, or arrange the walk, or to work at the little dress, or to do some other kindness at which he had been scoffing. Not that he did not rather like his little girls, after his manner. Indeed they were so beautiful, and of such various beauty, that his vanity and his caprice could hardly but be flattered when he vouchsafed a glance at the group. Nay, he took the trouble to do his utmost to counteract his wife's teaching, and stooped to occasional fits of education in his own school, seasons at which poor Jane's heart was well nigh bursting. It needed not, however, for the wisdom of childhood served each child, in turn, better than its loving mother's wisdom had served her. They found their father out, and three more hearts, little, but warm ones, dropped away from Henry Wilmslow. Who could love that vain, noisy, passionate sensualist?

Troubles, thick and fast, hard troubles from abroad, harder in her uncertain home—so passed the first twenty years of Jane Wilmslow's wedded life. Had Wilmslow been asked what was the chief grief of their household, he would have answered, "Poverty." They were poor, sometimes miserably poor, but Jane's heart would have scorned to make that answer. I do not know any one word which would have expressed

her misfortunes — two words would have done it, but she was too good to use them, for they were the names of her husband.

But they have won Aspen Court now. No more poverty, at least.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EXPERIENCED PLAYER FACES A CARD.

THE Wilmslows did not leave town quite so soon as Mr. Wilmslow had intended. For a family which has long been struggling with difficulties finds various small and sordid, but stubborn obstacles in the way of locomotion. A single man of limited means can walk silently out of his club, and into a shop in the Strand, buy a carpet-bag and some shirts, and a railway wrapper, and then there is nothing but his fare between him and any friendlier region he may decide upon while his cab drives into the terminus yard. A rich master of a house in a west end square can generally manage almost as easily, no matter how large his family, and if he keeps his dependents in proper terror and subjection, his carriage will be sent to the station in time to be hoisted upon its truck for the train which removes his august presence from the metropolis. But not so a group of five people, who have been trying to keep up appearances on the smallest and most uncertain income, and who can neither steal away gloomily, nor stalk away grandly. And but that we have had hints at

disagreeables, enough and to spare, already, we might record how many of the petty miseries of human life oppressed the Wilmslows during the days preparatory to their journey. For Mr. Molesworth, to whom the family had for years had to look as to their only friend, and who had certainly advanced a long series of monies in dribs and drabs, just large enough to keep the Wilmslows from actual want, had not thought it necessary to be very liberal in providing funds for their journey. He admitted that considerable sums would be coming in soon from the estates, but at present there was nothing tangible, and although he was prepared to do what was requisite, they must really husband everything; and, in short, the poor lady of Aspen had a trying time of it. The first considerable sum, indeed, which Molesworth handed over for the expedition, Henry Wilmslow so piteously reduced by a sudden fit of billiards in Leicester Square, and by buying himself a magnificent cloak with sables, that the balance was not worth talking about, and, accordingly, he would not talk about it. Then Jane, of course, had to go and plead with the lawyer for more; and though he was always gracious and kind to her, even in days when she was most compelled to pester and waylay him for supplies, he was not very open-handed. However, clothes were bought, and Emma, Kate, and Amy, who had never been

dressed as they ought always to have been, were made to look very nice (they had in a dress-maker, and worked away with her in a bed-room, for their respected papa made it so disagreeable by joking with her, and otherwise, besides smoking, that there was no sitting in the parlour); and Jane herself, but that she looked worn and weary, would, in her new dresses, have reminded Henry Wilmslow of their old days, if his hard bloodshot eyes had held a gleam of kindness in them. But by the time the dresses were ready, and new boots and new bonnets were bought, and divers other things which it may not be necessary to catalogue, and of which, for some years, I am afraid the poor dear girls' catalogue was a brief one (and such as their mother was quite ashamed to stick on the inside of the lid of their boxes, at the few periods when she could afford them a school), and when the landlady was paid in full, and the butcher paid half, and the baker up to Christmas, and such heaps of small bills had been settled, that it was an irritating mystery how others should still keep dropping in, some with piteous, some with bullying *viv^d voce* introductions, Mrs. Wilmslow's patience, and Mr. Molesworth's money were very nearly exhausted. But at length all was done, and the morning actually arrived when the female part of the family set forth with the luggage; it being hardly necessary to say that the haughty Mr.

Wilmslow, in his cloak of sables, had abandoned them to their own devices, and had departed to Leicester Square for a final game at billiards, or that he met them at the station, rather flushed with liquor, but looking bold and imposing, as he swaggered up the platform in his mighty cloak, discharging a very large oath at a very small newspaper-boy for running against him. He had never cared about Jane, and his wife had long learned to care only for doing her duty to him, and of course it did not occur to either to be proud of the other. But as they stood together, waiting while the carriage glided up, a good many looks were directed towards them by other passengers—Jane was pronounced the model of an English matron, only it was a pity, people thought, that she looked so pale; and Henry was conceived, from his sables and his haughty bearing, to be some kind of Ambassador,—a sonorous title, to which folks who have not seen much of embassies attach extraordinary ideas of majesty.

To those who are unluckily acquainted with Wilmslows of their own, it may possibly occur as curious, that my Mr. Wilmslow did not, as soon as Aspen Court was decreed to his wife, immediately proceed to encumber the same. A man whose wife has just had an estate of 5,000*l.* a-year adjudged to her, is surely lord of many men's purses, and need not go very far to look for their

obliging holders. Do you think that Henry Wilmslow did not remember this? And when the first supplies the solicitor sent to Mrs. Wilmslow had been squandered, and the Ambassador was quite clear that no more would be forthcoming for his personal benefit, he did march off, savagely, to Mr. Shandon, the Christian usurer, of whom mention has been made, and attempted a negotiation. But as he seemed to want the money so very much, and did not even pretend to hesitate over the price at which Mr. Shandon proposed to sell his gold, the latter gentleman began to suspect a downright swindle, and after making an appointment with Wilmslow, went off to Molesworth, which Henry had particularly requested him not to do. I do not suppose you and I care what passed between an attorney and a bill-discounter about a scamp—enough to say that Wilmslow got neither money, nor discount wine, nor a Wardour Street Correggio, nor Birmingham jewellery, from the excellent Mr. Shandon, but he did get a special invitation from Mr. Molesworth to call upon him at a given hour. And when the Ambassador came forth from that audience, he looked exceedingly irate, but thenceforth he tried to raise no more money.

They departed for Gloucestershire. But the delay occasioned a slight change in the intended arrangements. Mr. Carlyon did not accompany,

but preceded them. Mr. Molesworth thought that it would be more pleasant for Jane (for whose comfort, except in the article of matrimony, he had always shown more concern than it was his custom to exhibit for anybody but his own family) to find the Court prepared to receive her. So, a day or two after his first intimation to Carlyon that he was to go to Aspen, he sent for him, and said,

“ Do you shoot, Bernard ? ”

“ Yes, upon occasion,” said Carlyon. “ But the capital gun you gave me three years ago has seldom come into use, lately.”

“ I—gave—you ? ” replied Molesworth, apparently endeavouring to recal the circumstance. “ Did I ? Do you know, I had quite forgotten it ? ”

Carlyon did not know—nor even believe it. However, he only said,

“ Wilkinson never made a better. Lord Clam-perville, I think, told you that I did not do any discredit to your present, when we were at White Oaks.”

“ So he did, now you mention it. Oh, ah ! he said you were a dead shot, I remember. Well, I dare say you are tired of dawdling backwards and forwards after those Wilmslows, though Mrs. Wilmslow does speak so much in your favour. Go off at once, and bang away at the pheasants

and partridges. She will like to find a well-filled larder. Can you be off by to-night's train?"

"Certainly. But as for the pheasants and partridges," said Bernard, glancing at the "Law Almanac," which hung behind Molesworth—"this is the 10th of February."

"Is it?" said Molesworth. "Never mind if it is."

Quite understanding this, Carlyon said,

"There are some things which should be attended to, if I am to be away long."

"Anything Lobb can't do?"

"Not for a week or so. After that, the Lampton abstract must be taken up in earnest, and that I am afraid is rather over Mr. Lobb's head."

"He deserves to have it laid over his head, if it is. I wish he would learn some of your quickness. However, we will say nothing about the Lampton affair just now—leave Lobb a memorandum of what he must do. I'll take care he does it. And we'll write to you, if necessary. Linnery will give you any money you want. Take three hundred pounds."

"Three hundred pounds?" repeated Carlyon, distinctly, but without evincing any surprise.

"Yes. Of course you will not let Master Wilmslow know that you have so much money with you, or, indeed, a shilling more than you need. But if Mrs. Wilmslow seems to want, let

her have what she likes—in fact, you can lead up to it, if you see reason. Only not a farthing to him, except from me, direct. 'Would you like to take Chequerbent with you?'

"Just as you please. No doubt I can find work for him in the muniment room at Aspen—there is one, you mentioned."

"Did I? I don't remember it, but you recollect everything. Yes, rather a queer place, and the old tenants told queer stories about it, hideous noises, gnashings of teeth, bewailments, and so on—founded in cats, I dare say. Turn Chequerbent in there for an hour or two each day," said Mr. Molesworth, "and let him sort the old papers, and make a schedule of them—at any rate, make him seem to be doing something. Don't let him fall in love with either of the little Wilmslows—are they not nice children, Bernard?"

"Charming," said Carlyon, "though I suppose they would hardly thank you for calling them so. Miss Wilmslow is eighteen, she tells me."

"A dignified age, looked at by twenty-five. I am fifty-three. But they are very good girls, and, considering the scrambling way they have been brought up, they have some admirable notions of things. Their mother is a jewel;—if ever you marry, Carlyon, try for such a girl as Jane Tracy was, and treat her better than Henry Wilmslow has treated her."

"Well, Sir," said Bernard, "I believe that you helped Captain Wilmslow to that lady; should you have another like her in your gift, and think my qualifications at all equal to his, I dare say you will remember me."

"Who says I helped Wilmslow to his marriage?" demanded Molesworth, sternly.

"Why," said Carlyon, "was not the acknowledgment part of that exceedingly neat speech delivered by Mr. Wilmslow at the dinner you gave us in Furnival's Inn, in celebration of his victory?"

"A blatant drunkard," replied Molesworth, angrily. "Does his wife tell people the same?" he asked, turning with quickness to Carlyon. But, quick ball or slow ball, Carlyon's bat was ready for it.

"I imagine that her marriage is nearly the last thing poor Mrs. Wilmslow would care to talk about," he said.

"I don't know that," replied the lawyer. "Perhaps she may talk to you about it, for you seem to have made yourself a favourite in that quarter. If she does, I should like to know whether she thinks I had much hand in the match."

"I will remember," answered Bernard. "I think, however, that there is another subject on which she is much more likely to talk to me. I mean the state of Mr. Wilmslow's affairs, now

that we have gained the estate. Have you any instructions for me in this case, or am I supposed to know nothing?"

"How much *do* you know, Mr. Carlyon?" asked Molesworth, putting his hands together and looking steadily at Bernard.

This time the latter seemed a little surprised.

"I rather imagine," he said, "that I know as much as there is to be known in the matter."

"Very probably you do," said the solicitor; "still, with your good will, I should like to be informed what that comes to. A client's affairs are important things, and it is well to have no mistakes. I wish you, should Mrs. Wilmslow put the questions you expect, to tell her the exact truth, and I should also like to know the way you propose to put it."

"If the exact truth is to be told," said Carlyon, somewhat dubiously, "the statement will be simple; namely, that Mr. Wilmslow's affairs are precisely where they were, except that, in addition to old debts, he owes an enormous mass of costs, and that Aspen Court not only by right, but also by deed, signed by the Wilmslows, is actually the property of yourself."

While Bernard Carlyon was saying this, Molesworth's strongly-marked face and keen lips evinced such obvious discomposure, on the part of the solicitor, that the younger man became convinced

that something was going wrong, but he could not understand what. When he had finished, Molesworth looked hard at him for a minute, and could not help seeing that there was a genuine expression of surprise on the intelligent features. Mr. Molesworth then walked about the room for some time, breathed hard, looked carefully at all the prints on the walls, but without recognising any one of the chief justices and chief barons there suspended. Then he gazed at Carlyon a little more, and then his mind was made up. He resumed his seat.

"Bernard," he said, "I do not mind admitting to you that I expected a different answer, and that what you have said convinces me that I have made a blunder, for I know you to be incapable of obtaining information clandestinely. Let me know how far my blunder has gone. What is your authority for the statement you have made?"

"Your own hand-writing," said Carlyon, still more surprised.

"Ah!" said Molesworth, who knew all about it, "I see. You found a bundle of papers, from me, sent to your place, and among them was one marked *A. C.*, and the words *destroy this*."

"Precisely," said Carlyon, "and of course I have destroyed it."

"Ah, but you have read it first!" said Molesworth, "and you have an excellent memory. Now

let this be a warning to you through life. Never be in a hurry, if you can help it, and never be in the dark, if you can help it; but above all, never be in a hurry and in the dark at the same time. I was putting these papers together for you the other evening, and my lamp went out. I rang for another, and the mischief was done while Spott was running for it. I laid my hand on that paper, which I fancied I had placed in my drawer, and it slipped into your bundle, which I sent off hastily as I was going home. I explain this to you for a reason."

"One which I can divine, Sir, I suppose. I have accidentally become acquainted with what I was not intended to know."

"Neither you nor any one else at present," said Molesworth. "I tell you that in confidence. The deeds were not prepared in our office, but in—in Wales, in fact," said Mr. Molesworth, "that no one might chatter needlessly. But you have the secret, such as it is. Do you know that one of the greatest will-causes in the books was lost by just such an accident in 1817?"

"All that need be done," replied Carlyon, "is to revert to the question I asked you. Supposing that Mrs. Wilmslow makes the inquiries I anticipate, have you any instructions to give me as to the reply?"

"There is a little more than that," said Moles-

worth. "If this had been merely an ordinary business secret, a mere private affair which was not to be talked about, I should have gladly confided it, as I have done scores of other private matters, to your management. But there were powerful reasons against my doing so in this case, or rather, against my confiding it to any one living. I prepared the deeds myself; they were engrossed with blanks and filled up by another hand, who knew nothing of their contents."

"And the signatures?" thought Carlyon; but he said, "We have taken similar precautions once or twice before. They often do it in the country to baffle the curiosity of gossiping local stamp-officers."

"But this is a more important affair than an aristocratic mortgage or a shabby marriage-settlement," said Molesworth. "And as a man of honour who has become accidentally possessed of a secret, you will, I am sure, be glad to give me your solemn and sacred promise that you will never reveal what you have learned, and will act as if no such transaction had taken place."

"If you think it necessary to exact such a promise," said Carlyon, "pray do. I make it as solemnly as a promise can be made."

Molesworth's eye went over his ample table, and Bernard, tracking the glance, observed it rest upon a very small and rather dusty red volume.

However, Mr. Molesworth thought better of it, and did not propose to Mr. Carlyon to take an oath of secrecy.

“I am quite satisfied with your assurance,” said the lawyer, “and we will speak as if the affair were forgotten. If you are questioned at Aspen Court, and I agree with you that it is more than likely, keep as near to facts as you can. Explain that Mr. Wilmslow is so much involved by twenty years’ extravagance,—you need not be mealy-mouthed,—that though they will soon have a competency, it must be some years before they look upon themselves as resident landowners, or dream of spending a tenth of their income. I have impressed this upon him already rather strongly, and she is fully prepared to hear it, and, besides, will accept any statement made by you. Let me hear from you as soon as the Wilmslows have arrived, and you have anything to say. And so, a pleasant journey to you. And I tell you in all sincerity, that though certainly I had not designed the revelation which I have made to you, I do not regret it now. Perhaps you may see in it an additional reason why I wish you to go to Aspen Court. If you don’t, no matter. So be off,—take Chequerbent, and God bless you.” And he shook Carlyon’s hands with a cordiality he seldom evinced except to valuable clients, with whom that perfervid salutation was

sometimes found very telling, as they went away saying what a good-hearted man Mr. Molesworth was. I do not mean to say that such was precisely Bernard Carlyon's observation as he left his employer.

"I am to have the pleasure of your company into Gloucestershire, Mr. Chequerbent," said Carlyon, as he entered the clerks' office.

"Sir, you do me proud," replied Paul, with a bow of mock gravity. "Should I be indiscreet in inquiring what party's pig has departed this life now?"

"How exceedingly vulgar you are in your conversation, Chequerbent," said Mr. Lobb.

"All spite—miserable spite," returned Paul; "because by reason of my profound knowledge of law, and of my generally felicitous method of transacting business, I am selected to go into the country, and you are not. Where are we going, Mr. Carlyon?"

"To Aspen Court."

"I'm agreeable," said Mr. Chequerbent.
"When?"

"To-night, at eight. Will you dine with me, or meet me at the station?"

"The latter," said Paul, "for reasons,—one of which is, that you have a habit of taking popular thoroughfares, and passing certain shops, which just now I find it convenient to eschew."

"But I will go any way you like. Besides, it will be dark."

"No, thank you. I will meet you at the train."

"Very well; don't be late, please."

But Paul *was* late, so late that the bell rang, and the whistle sounded, and the train went off, taking Carlyon, but not Chequerbent. Bernard wondered where his intended companion was, but perhaps hardly regretted his absence, as it gave him ample opportunity for considering the interview of the day. And he thought it over and over as he rushed across the western counties, and had by no means dismissed it from his mind when he fell asleep, and consequently dreamed that Mr. Molesworth and Mr. Wilmslow were fighting for the Ambassador's cloak of sables, which suddenly turned into a parchment deed, and exploded with a bang. Morpheus was certainly the first inventor of pantomime tricks, and perhaps that is why it is so easy to go to sleep at a pantomime.

Reaching Bristol, Carlyon left the railway, and struck across the country for Aspen Court. When he arrived, it was the forenoon of a fine February day. The sun was bright, and even warm, and the sky was cloudless, though its hue was rather of a faint lilac grey than a glowing blue. There had been a white frost, and it still clustered in shady nooks and holes in the grass, but it was melting away from wet roofs, and from the shining

leaves of the evergreens. A dim mist hung on the horizon, and brought out the defined forms and tracery of the leafless trees. The roads were well-dried and firm, the genial moisture slightly deepening their brown hue, and freshening the mould in the little village gardens. The birds twittered on all sides, but the only song was that of the lark. Crocuses and double daisies, yellow and crimson, were the chief flowers to be seen, but the shoots of the trees were green and bursting, and all promised an early season. Carlyon had an eye for these things among others, though the fields of the Inn of Lincoln are scarcely favourable to the study of rural nature.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT TENANT WAITED IN ASPEN COURT.

THOSE who had been expelled from Aspen Court, and of whom we shall hear more before our story is over, had abandoned it somewhat in haste. No sooner was the final decision given, which assigned the right of ownership to the Wilmslows, than the old house was evacuated by the wrongful holders. This speedy surrender had been by no means necessary, for Mr. Molesworth would have afforded them ample time for leisurely retreat; nor was it, in a worldly point of view, very judicious, for few persons would be inclined to give them credit for the feeling which dictated so hurried an abnegation of a claim previously maintained with English sturdiness. We rather like to see people, who do battle at first, hold on to the last, and vindicate original error by gallant obstinacy. And if the condemned garrison had chosen to continue in possession, Molesworth would have offered them reasonable terms. He manifested no eagerness to dispossess them, and would, as soon as the rights of his clients were finally admitted, have permitted the previous owners to remain on sufferance, or as

tenants, as long as they pleased. Of this, indeed, he made no secret, and of his placability the defeated party had been duly apprised. But they would accept no favour, nor remain by permission where they had dwelt by right. Twenty-four hours after formal intimation that Aspen Court was another's, the late owners had taken their last look at its mountainous roof, and sparkling windows, from the carriage which was hurrying them away. The legal forms incident to a compulsory change of ownership were performed by a country agent of Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge, and when Carlyon drove up to Aspen Court, the house appeared uninhabited. After considerable waste of energy in shouting, and rapping, and rattling, at every point where noise seemed likely to be of any use, and having awakened nothing but the echoes, Bernard determined on escalade. Causing the driver to place his portmanteau in a shed, and dismissing the man, Carlyon scaled a low wall, and thence, over some of the offices, he made his way to the top of another wall, which bounded a portion of the great garden at the rear of the house, and which boundary connected a set of stables with the servants' rooms. He was, therefore, on the west wing of the mansion. The height of the wall was considerable, but Carlyon was active and fearless, and in a minute more he was standing, rather flushed, upon the walk behind the tall

trellise, of which mention has been made. It looked naked enough now, and the frost was steaming from the lattice-work.

But still there was no sign of an inhabitant, and Bernard traversed the garden, and examined every window and door in the rear, without better success than he had met in the front. The doors were fast, and the lower windows secured by shutters. The birds followed him curiously from point to point, taking up positions on the trees near the house, and twittering their commentaries on the stranger's conduct.

At last, after a very careful and repeated scrutiny of all probable and improbable entrances, Carlyon said—

“Well, *viam inveniam aut*—and so forth, a motto which has served me once or twice before in my time. Do you happen to understand Latin, birds?”

And thereupon, struggling up upon a window-sill, and thence springing to the crooked arm of a tree that stood near that portion of the east wing which has been described as fitted up in cottage style, he ascended the tree until he was about on a level with the flower-balconies projecting from the first-floor windows.

“The leap's not very much,” he said; “but, if that woodwork is rotten—and most things are in this world—”

And so he came down the tree again; but a thought struck him. He searched the yard and outhouses, and speedily found a plank, which he brought to the tree, and again ascending, dragged it up after him, and getting to his former elevation, dropped the plank, so as to form a bridge from the bough to the window.

“ Bold is the wise man, but not overbold, says the proverb. Now, Wisdom, keep your head steady.”

And with a few swift steps Carlyon crossed his bridge and stood up close to the window; the balcony, however, bent and cracked beneath his weight, and some of the wet mould fell down upon the stone path below.

“ Quite as well not to have trusted you,” said Bernard. “ But the window is fast, and my destiny is burglary, after all.” And dashing in a pane of glass with his elbow, he pushed back the bolt, and lifted the sash. He then sprang into the room.

In this fashion did Bernard Carlyon make his first entrance into Aspen Court.

He found himself in a small but comfortable apartment, from which the gay carpet had not been removed, and in which there were a few articles of modern furniture. A looking-glass had obviously been wrenched down from above the chimney-piece, while on the table, and on some

gilded brackets, circular spaces, less dusty than the rest, showed that a room, carelessly kept, had lately been denuded of its ornaments.

Carlyon, turning to the right, made for the front of the mansion. He passed through a long range of rooms, dark and dusty, and came to the angle of the house. Pulling open a door covered with red baize, he emerged into a gallery running the whole length of the front, but not in the front itself. It was lighted on one side only, and that the side which looked upon the garden. A dark oak-floor, highly polished, and with a narrow rivulet of India matting flowing along its centre, narrowed nearly to a point in the perspective. There were several doors, set deep in the opposite wall, and towards the centre a gap, and a massive oak-rail, indicated a broad staircase. Carlyon stood at one end of the gallery, and close to him, and nearly occupying that end, was a large window, against which the branches of a yew-tree incessantly brushed and rustled. This looked upon the churchyard, and the white church tower itself rose behind the yew. At the far distant end there was also a window, but filled with stained glass, whose many colours gave Bernard the idea that the gallery was an enormous kaleidoscope.

All was silent, except the restless rustling of the yew-tree, which kept rubbing itself up against

the house, as an affectionate cat brushes along its master's hand. Bernard walked on, trying the doors in his way, but they were locked. He reached the stair-head, and found two flights of the broadest and easiest black oak stairs, meeting and turning at an ample landing, lighted from above. Around on the walls hung some very large old paintings, of which little could be discerned, except that in the centre of one of them time had spared the figure of a white sprawling naked baby, held up, in a black hand, by one leg, from which it might be inferred that in the adjacent darkness lurked Solomon, delivering his judgment in the celebrated case of the *etairai*. Some aged maps and charts, with elephants, many miles high, populating the Sahara, and grinning sea-monsters of still greater vastness, sporting in the Atlantic deeps, garnished the lower portion of the stair-wall. Carlyon, descending, came to a passage under the gallery, and running in the same direction, but instead of traversing it, he drew aside a large red curtain to his left as he reached the bottom of the stair, and found himself in an arched opening, and looking into the great hall of Aspen. It was tenantless and still. The family portraits along the walls were staring out with their energetic superciliousness, the wonderful clock stood paralysed and self-contradictory, the huge chimney-piece showed the remains of a

wood-fire, which had been, and was gone. The loneliness was something more than mere negation of life—there was an actual deathlike presence in the old deserted hall.

Bernard stood for some time contemplating the scene, until its influence began to grow upon him; and even when he crossed the hall, his step was quicker, and not so decided as it had been in the chambers and gallery. Very weak, no doubt, and sentimental, in a young and healthy man, to own any difference of feeling in one large room and in another, except as regards draughts, and you, Captain Hawhaw, would have lit a cigaw, and you, Mr. St. Wardour, would have grimaced at the pictures. Only, you see, Nature will *not* be consistent, and make all her men to one pattern—your own. However, I have nothing to do with reasons. I only record that Bernard Carlyon stepped very hastily across the hall to the great door, and unhooked chains, and lifted down bars, and pulled back bolts, as speedily as he could, and felt glad to throw open that huge gap, and let the sunshine come streaming in, and overflow the place with its cheerfulness. And a stranger afar off, who saw that mighty breach suddenly made in the front of the mansion, would have observed a light figure emerge from it, and spring through the portico, and quite out upon the broad gravelled path, as if escaping from a pursuer. Such was

Bernard Carlyon's first progress through the old house at Aspen.

Needless to say, that the first of such sensations was the last with Carlyon, or that he speedily re-entered the house, and explored its open chambers, high and low. And having finally convinced himself that the place was utterly abandoned, he proceeded to make arrangements for the reception of its owners. He placed an old couple, from the neighbouring village, in temporary possession, and obtaining a horse, crossed the country to the nearest town, where he enlisted the services of the necessary tradesmen. Carlyon's knowledge of business and decided manner greatly facilitated the rest, and having selected a set of apartments, such as he thought Mrs. Wilmslow would prefer, in a very few days he was prepared for her reception. Five or six rooms, on the west front, had in that time been made to look very comfortable. Carlyon carried out the spirit of his instructions from Mr. Molesworth, even to the extent of telling a couple of eager, smiling, red-handed country girls, strongly recommended to him by a farmer with whom he had made acquaintance, that though he could not undertake to engage them, he advised them to be in the way when Mrs. Wilmslow arrived. For a bachelor, he really contrived to forget very little that was absolutely wanted.

The superintending these arrangements occu-

pied most of Bernard's time, but he contrived to make himself acquainted with the features of the estate, and of the country immediately around. He was surprised to find that no servant of the late occupants, no steward, wood-bailiff, or even gamekeeper appeared to assist his investigations, or to ask for renewed employment. Such was the case, however; and on inquiry in the village, and elsewhere, he was unable to learn that such officials had ever been engaged for Aspen. The tenants had paid their rents at the Court. What had to be done upon the estate was always done suddenly and well, but by strangers, who arrived, did it, and departed. The game, which was plentiful in that county, and severely preserved all round, was neglected by the owners of Aspen Court, to the exceeding indignation of their aristocratic neighbours, whose little armies of keepers were in constant and direful night-battles with poachers. The menials of the mansion, if there had been any, had departed with their employers, and there certainly never was a case of more complete dispossess of a family. Carlyon had, however, some little comprehension of the mystery.

In about a week the Wilmslows arrived, and were welcomed on their threshold by the vigilant Carlyon, flanked by old Jubble and his old wife, the rear being brought up by the rosy Martha and the sturdy Mary, whose curtsies began when

the carriage was seen at the gates, and ceased at no particular time during that day. The Ambassador, in his sables, got out first, looking rather cross, the brandy he had taken at a great many places on the road, having, with the journey itself, simply irritated him. Carlyon handed out gentle Mrs. Wilmslow, who, even at the moment of taking possession of her prize, never thought of entering until her children were by her side. Bernard, after the first salutation, drew back, in order that if there were any kindly or gentlemanly instinct left in Wilmslow, the latter might introduce his wife to her newly-won home. But the Ambassador strode hastily forward into the hall, and Bernard, with one glance at him, and the faintest half-smile at his own absurdity, in supposing that Wilmslow would act otherwise, addressed a few earnest words of courtesy to Jane, as he conducted her through the porch.

“Let me have the very great pleasure, Mrs. Wilmslow, of being the first to congratulate you on taking possession of Aspen Court,” he said, with a grave and respectful inclination, as she entered. “It is what ought to be said to her,” he thought, but his recollection went back to Molesworth’s title-deeds.

Poor Jane, not much used of late to hear a gentleman’s accents, touched his hand for a moment, and turning to her daughter Emma, who

was nearest, clasped her round the neck, and burst into tears. A home of her own, again, at last ! No more shifts and contrivances, no more extortionate landladies and slatternly servants, no more humiliating apologies when the rent was not ready, no more vulgar insolence to her children, or vulgar familiarities with them, rather harder to bear. Sadly common-place, Jane Tracy, as you enter your ancestral halls, but you are a lady and a mother, and, I suppose, we must forgive you for not treading haughtily, and with flashing eyes, and stamping on your hearthstone, and planting your victorious banner. You may have your cry out, holding pretty Emma's neck, and making her cry too. The other two girls would join you and have quite a scene, but a word or two from Bernard, said very kindly, shows them that they had better not; but they will not go away, though a minute before they were dying to start on a journey of exploration.

The Ambassador, having surveyed the hall, comes up, and is, of course, utterly unable to comprehend why his wife should be crying. However, he is good enough not to reproach her, but advises that the carriage be sent off, and the door shut, as it is such a cursedly raw day, and demands of Carlyon whether he has got a decent cigar to give him, for the weeds he bought at Bristol were not fit to fumigate the fleas in a poodle. And

receiving a satisfactory answer, he playfully enfolds little Amy in his great cloak, and imitates the roar of a bear, and really seems improved for social intercourse, by the feeling that at last he has got hold of Aspen Court.

Mrs. Wilmslow, having dried her eyes, and kissed Emma—and if you had seen how pretty Emma looked with her bright blue eyes, and with her rich brown curls, rather about her face from the journey and the embracing, but not a bit limp though, and with the fresh colour which the Gloucestershire air had already given her, you would have thought she as richly deserved kissing as any girl of eighteen ever did in this world—business proceeded. Carlyon presented his four vassals, explaining that their adherence was dependent only upon the will of the lady of the manor, and the red-cheeked maidens bobbed and blushed with great vehemence. Then, apologizing for showing Mrs. Wilmslow the way in her own house, he marshalled her and the young ladies to the apartments he had prepared, explaining that he had ventured to do no more than was absolutely necessary, as Mrs. Wilmslow might not even like the rooms. And Jane thanked him in her sincere, quiet, ladylike way, while the girls, declaring that everything was perfect, instantly proceeded to re-arrange everything, incessantly appealing to their mamma and Mr. Carlyon

whether they were not infinitely improving the place. Bernard thought that three girls could not appear to more advantage than did Emma, Kate, and Amy, as hastily removing their bonnets and cloaks, but retaining certain invaluable polka jackets, warm and close fitting, just the things for travelling, they ran about pulling a table one way, and carrying chairs another, pushing a couch into the middle of a room, and then, seized with a judicial caprice, all suddenly sitting down in a row, on the same sofa, flushed and laughing, to consider the general effect.

That was a good opportunity for Carlyon to remark—we will do the same—that Emma, as has been said, was blue-eyed and brown-haired. Her features were of a pure Grecian type, but not so regular as to be severe. Her complexion was very fair and delicate; and although not so full in form as her mother had been when young, her figure was symmetrical in its rounding grace, and held obvious promise of perfection. Kate, the second, was slighter, as tall as her elder sister, but darker, and with more aquiline features, and beautiful brown eyes, capable, when the young lady was surprised, or meant fun, of expanding so very largely as to aid the “well-pronounced” nose in a capital imitation of an owl. Kate’s hair was dark-brown and braided; her head was excellently set on, and though there was some-

what more of sauciness in the face than in that of the gentler Emma, still the expression was high-bred, and good. As for that other merry little girl, with eyes like Kate's, and hair like Emma's and a voice and a laugh that are like everything pleasant and musical, we can hardly assign her a style yet, but she is thoroughly English, and her name is Amy. They have all very pretty hands, now a little dusty with their work, and there are six charming feet hidden in those warm travelling boots. Jane Wilmslow looks at them proudly, and yet is almost ready to cry again at the idea that in future they will have nice large rooms, wholesome air, plentiful exercise, and—but, come, Mrs. Wilmslow, we cannot have this all over again. Here comes the Ambassador for his cigar: he pronounces your rooms decent enough, but swears that he will have a smoking room and a sofa to himself, where a fellow can lie about and not hear anything about French verbs and those blessed crotchet patterns. You will do well to humour that whim.

Up spring the girls—and now to see the whole house from end to end. Will mamma go? No, mamma is tired; besides she must talk to the servants, with all thanks to Mr. Carlyon for his thoughtfulness. Papa—well, they ask him very dutifully, and not at all as if they would rather he did not come; however, they do not

look very sad when he refuses, saying that Carlyon's cigars are very good, and that he shall walk out. Well, then they must ask Mr. Carlyon which way they had better begin, and of course he undertakes to give them the points of the country. He remembers that all the doors in the long gallery are locked, and suggests that if everybody searched for the keys, which must be some where, it would be well. The proposition is carried unanimously, and a reward is proclaimed for the finder, namely, the right of first entering all the rooms. And so the three young ladies and Mr. Bernard Carlyon descend again into the great hall.

He draws the red curtain back, shows them the staircase, and explains how the gallery runs, and how the wings turn ; and they listen attentively, especially Kate, who has a knack of comprehending explanations and remembering them. And then the girls all run up-stairs, declaring that they know all about it, and Carlyon, though aware that they all like him very much, thinks that he had better leave them just now to amuse themselves. Yet he would like to see them skimming down the long gallery, it was so lonely when he first entered it, and those three bright figures would make the picture quite a new one. So he mounts the stairs, and arrives at the top just in time to see them gliding along towards the baize-covered door, through which he had

originally come into the gallery from the east wing. Amy turns and waves her handkerchief, he answers the signal, and they are gone.

Carlyon takes the other direction, and walks up to the coloured glass window, which he examines with care, and pronounces to be very bad, and fit to be a present from a mediæval-minded glazier to a fifteen hundred pound church. He resolves to counsel the girls to practise archery in the gallery, placing their target in that end. And then he turns, and considers his position in the house, and meditates two or three things which he will do, if Molesworth does not soon write to him to return. If he is to stay there, he has no idea of wasting his own time as well as Mr. Molesworth's. If there is no letter in the morning, he will ride over to the town, and get some books. And this is a good hunting country —there seems no reason why he should not see about that too, and he speculates whether the Ambassador has ever been a hunting man. Most likely not, he thinks. Wilmslow can scarcely have cared for an amusement not intrinsically vicious. And then he thinks again, that if he, Bernard Carlyon, had been bringing a wife to Aspen Court, which she had won for him, he—but he makes an impatient gesture, and is actually displeased with himself for his own presumption in comparing himself for a moment with such an

animal as the Ambassador. Even involuntary as was the comparison, it was humiliating, and—

One loud, long shriek.

It came from the east wing, where the girls are. One moment to assure himself of this, and the next he is flying down the gallery at his best speed. Through the baize-door, and into the wing, and he looks hard before him as he runs, but can see nothing of them. Still on from room to room, searching each with one sweeping glance as he passes—on—on—he has reached the room into which he broke. Yes, for there is the shattered window, and the bent balcony. They have gone further, a door is open. Through it, and he hastily passes three or four small dark apartments, with shutters closed, but light streaming through their crevices—the girls are not in any of these. But straight before him, and still a couple of rooms off another door—open, and the apartment is obviously darkened—is that sobbing? They are there.

Amy is kneeling on the floor, in the extreme of terror, and Emma and Kate are seeking to drag her away. But she stares as if spellbound.

There is a strange sight before her. The room is partially closed, but there is light enough to reveal its general character, which appears, at first sight, to be that of a sort of laboratory, with a table in the centre. Beside the table is a figure,

upon which the light chiefly falls. Seated in a chair, in an attitude of grim jauntiness, and seeming to regard the terrified group of girls with a courteous grin, sits the pictorial Death—a Skeleton. One elbow leans on the table, but its bony finger is crooked, and beckons the living towards it. The other arm hangs down, and holds, in mockery, a gay Cavalier hat and feather, and the legs are inserted in the spacious boots of the same period.

Amy had broken in first, and taking in the ghastly object with a look, uttered the scream which Carlyon had heard, and fell on her knees. Her sisters, arriving a moment later, were not so astounded but that they had a thought for her, and were striving to force her out. But she resisted, and, terrified as they were, the task was beyond them.

“Oh! take her out!—take her out;” they cried, piteously, as Carlyon entered.

He also comprehended the scene at a glance, but not in terror. I hope that the fierce curse Carlyon launched against the contriver, whoever he were, of that hideous jest, will not be written down against him as a sin.

“Better,” he said, in the kindest voice, “to let her see the atrocious folly in full light, or the impression may abide with her.” And he tore back the shutters with a strong and hasty hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BERNARD CARLYON GOES A FISHING.

THE light filled the room, and what had been impressive became common-place, and what had been mysterious looked ridiculous, as often happens in the moral as well as the physical world, when we are vouchsafed any sudden and complete enlightenment. The three girls and Carlyon were in a formal, oak-panelled chamber, scantily furnished, with numerous shelves around it, on some of which were broken retorts, blackened crucibles, jars, portions of galvanic batteries, tubes, cracked glasses, and other chemical *débris*. An old brass-clamped cabinet, and the high-backed arm-chair, occupied by the ghastly object, now shorn of all its effectiveness, were, with the table on which a few books were scattered, the principal contents of the apartment.

Carlyon threw open the window, and then hastened to raise poor little Amy from her kneeling position.

“Surely,” he said cheerily, “you do not mean to be frightened by that collection of surgeon’s rubbish. The owner had no business to

leave it here, certainly, and we will put it away for him, or we will send it after him in a great parcel, won't we? Come, Amy dear," he continued in a tone of playful reproach, "this is sad cowardice in one of the heiresses of Aspen."

"Oh! I wish we had never come to Aspen," sobbed Amy, opening her eyes, but taking piteous care that her glances should fall upon her sisters, and away from the spot where her instinct told her the vision of terror was still to be seen. "That dreadful thing will sit by my side in my dreams, and some day—and some day—" and her sobs stifled her utterance.

"And some day," urged Carlyon gently, "you will laugh at it for pretending to be a terror, when it is only some dusty old bones tied together by wires, and dressed in the rubbish of a masquerade shop, and then it will tumble all to pieces out of your dreams, as it shall do now in two minutes, out of the chair, if you will just let your sister support you while I see to it."

"Then you do not think," said Emma, in an under tone, "that he—that it has been sitting there ever since he died—the hat is a cavalier's—I mean that he did not die there and never was discovered until we—"

"No, that cannot be," said Kate, who, though still very white, had recovered her self-posses-

sion; "look at that book on the table, it is Johnson's Dictionary."

"Just so," said Bernard, looking at the speaker with considerable admiration, "that is the way to deal with mystifications. But I will convince you even more completely, in a moment, if Amy will release me," for the still agitated girl clung to him convulsively, and could hardly be induced to transfer her clasp to Emma. "There! now for our spectre."

And approaching the skeleton, he removed the hat, lifted the legs from the boots, which he pushed away in different directions, brought down the beckoning arm, and, finding that the figure had been carefully secured by ligatures, so as to preserve its attitude, he cut them away, and the human scaffold subsided helplessly into the arm-chair.

"It is rather for Amy's sake than for yours that I am doing this," he observed; "It may be well that she should see what a very commonplace contrivance has terrified her. You see it is all wired, and was probably borrowed from some surgeon's cabinet, in order to be set up here." And he removed the skull, and doubled up the skeleton on the table. Carlyon then sat down in the chair vacated by the apparition, and begged Amy to look round.

Slowly, and urged by the affectionate entreaties

of her sisters, Amy brought herself to note the heap of bones on the table, and after a shudder she gazed steadily at them. But the next moment her gaze fell upon Bernard, who occupied the seat in which the skeleton had been, and who, unconsciously, had taken nearly the same attitude as that in which the figure had been placed. Her eyes dilated, and she uttered a wild cry.

“Oh ! worse, worse—come out, come out, come out !” and she broke into an hysterical passion, followed by violent weeping.

“If mamma were here,” said Emma, looking very much distressed.

“I suppose she must know,” said Kate, “or else it would be pleasant to keep this from her, for a little while at least, for she is not well, and ought not to be vexed on the first day of her arrival. We would tell it her afterwards as an adventure. But Amy’s poor eyes will betray all ; and then your white cheeks, Emma. What do you think, Mr. Carlyon ?”

“If it were possible to save Mrs. Wilmslow any vexation,” said Bernard, “and you thought I could assist in any way—let us think. Your sister is calmer now ; what would an hour in the fresh air do towards bringing back all your complexions ? There must be some way out from this part of the house, so that you might avoid the

hall. I wonder what there is beyond this room. Shall we see?"

"I hope we shall make no more discoveries," said Kate, a little tremulously.

"At any rate I will be the pioneer," said Bernard, crossing to a door on the further side of the room. "I told you how I had to break in at a window on this wing; it would have been curious if I had selected this room for my entry."

"How glad I am that you did not," said Emma, earnestly. "You would have seen the horrid thing through the window, started back, lost your footing, and fallen down upon the stone pavement. Oh! I am so glad you did not. How dreadfully cruel and wicked it was to set it up here."

"Something tells me, as they say in novels, I mean, though, that I think it most probable, that some day I shall have an opportunity of making that observation to the person himself," said Carlyon quietly, "in which case I shall remember Amy's terror, though I hope she will have forgotten it. This door is locked, but I think I can force it."

But Kate's quick eye, now that she had regained her composure, caught sight of a glimmer of metal on the table.

"So, the keys," said Bernard. "It was determined, you see, that we should come here before

getting into the rooms in the gallery. The right of first search is with you. Will you begin here?"

But Kate shook her head, and Carlyon proceeded to try the keys, and at length the lock gave way. The girls drew back, half expecting some second frightful appearance, but when the door was opened, there was seen but a well-lighted landing, from which a narrow stair led down to the lower floor. At the foot of the staircase, as Bernard had expected, was a small strong door, which let them out into the grass-covered garden.

"This part of our domain seems dreadfully neglected," said Emma, delighted with the ample plot before them, "but we are great horticulturists, and we must take it in hand. This grass must be mown close, and—Amy, dear child, what *is* it?" she exclaimed, as Amy threw herself into Kate's arms, and pointed at some object from which she averted her face. They followed the direction of her finger

"Her nerves are terribly shaken," said Bernard; "she has caught sight of that statue of Phocion, and fancied it into another terror. I fear every place will be haunted for her for some little while."

"I see that we shall not be able to keep it secret," said Kate, regretfully. "Amy is alter-

nately hot and cold, and too ill for any one to overlook the signs, and mamma least of all. Do you bring her in, and I will go on and prepare mamma."

"But you need not go back the same way," said Carlyon, considerately, "I can bring you round to the front."

"Do, do take Emma and Amy that way," said the spirited girl, "I am not at all nervous now," and she tripped back to the door. Whether her good little heart did not beat fast, as she re-entered, alone, the apartment of the skeleton, whether she looked straight before her as she passed through, or risked a glance at the chair, or even at the heap of bones on the table, or whether her little feet did not make very rapid way through all those darkened rooms and the apartments beyond them until she came into the gallery, it would be unkind to inquire. But it is certain that so effectual was Kate Wilmslow's command over her nerves, that she managed to enter her mother's room with something like a smile, and to tell her story so clearly and gently, that Mrs. Wilmslow was ready at the hall-door with quiet, unquestioning, comforting love in her great blue eyes, to receive her fluttering little one when she came up, and to conduct her to her nest.

Oh, dear me! Some excellent persons, when

they hear of a painful thing that has happened to your earthly tabernacle, do, by way of dressing their countenances to suit the time, make the most unrighteous faces at you, setting their teeth, and sucking in their breath, as if hissing the mischance. Some again, in earnest kindness, do reprove you bitterly, and demand how you ever could go and thrust yourself upon such peril, quarrelling with you and reproaching you for obstinately walking in the streets, when you know that tiles will fall and horses run away. Some, once more, will so flurry and terrify themselves at the sight of your injury, that not only are they helpless to aid you, but potent to hurt you by causing you to grieve the more, because your suffering makes them suffer. Well, they all, after their manner, express sympathy and sorrow, and God forgive him who scoffs at kindness, let it be ever so uncouthly or unwisely made manifest. But if you or I should chance to fall into such ill-luck as needs a nurse, let us hope for such a one as Jane Wilmslow, with her steady and loving eyes, and her full, rich, voice of comfort—taking for granted all the past, of which she knows enough, and will hear nothing, and instantly and calmly applying herself to the present. Perhaps we may never want such a friend, I trust we may have such a one and not want her; but even in that case it might not be amiss, knowing

how much trouble goes up and down in this world, if we did society the good turn of proposing such a friend, and her ways, as example, I will not say for ourselves, because we are all perfect, but for those over whom we may have any influence.

Some time passed, and the Wilmslows began to settle in their new home. Mrs. Wilmslow had a confidential interview with Carlyon, and declared herself very grateful to Mr. Molesworth for the forethought which had dictated his provision for her comfort, entirely coinciding in his idea as to the prudent and quiet life which, for the present, it would be necessary for them to lead. She surveyed, in her own noiseless way, every portion of the house, made herself perfectly acquainted with its capabilities and advantages, and soon expanded Carlyon's arrangements into a charming series of rooms, over which her womanly taste, aided by a moderate outlay, diffused that pleasant refinement which enhances, not sacrifices, comfort. A cheerful sort of den was set apart for the Ambassador and his smoke, and it was made so luxurious, with its couch and its lounging chair, and its selection of exceedingly light reading—some yellow-papered French novels among the rest—that one might almost suppose that the designing contrivers did not care how many hours the head of the family might spend there.

And as for the details of domestic administration, I do not think it can be necessary to say how cleverly and sensibly Jane managed them, or how speedily as charming a *ménage* was organized as her means permitted, or as could indeed be desired in the retirement to which the family was destined. Jane herself was for the time more completely happy than she had been, poor thing, for many a long year, and she thought that if, while their resources were nursing up, she could obtain the assistance of an accomplished governess in completing the education of her daughters, and could manage to keep some little ponies, extravagant woman, for their use, and if Mr. Molesworth would let her know exactly how much money she might calculate upon, and at what times it would arrive, she should have nothing to do but be thankful, that, after so many shipwrecks, she had got into a quiet port at last. *Dieu dispose.*

As for the Ambassador himself, it was quite delightful to see what a change was wrought upon him by his changed circumstances. He became almost bearable. He flew into very few passions in the course of the day. Even if he could not see his boathooks at the moment he wanted them, or his cigar-match missed fire, or the water in his little grog-kettle delayed to boil, he really swore very mildly, considering the provocation ; and was so amenable to reason as to admit that his wife

might not be exactly in fault in the matter, beyond her keeping such somethingly stupid servants, who could not remember a blessed thing they were told, and be somethinged to their idiotcy. Then he got himself a spade, and set to work to dig the garden, a capital occupation, which he pleasingly varied by chopping into instalments all the long worms he turned up. He bought an unfortunate dog from the village, and devoted himself very sedulously to teach it conjuring tricks, and for three days the girls were made very unhappy by its howls under his flogging, but on the fourth it bit him, so he hanged it, partly in wrath, and partly in fear lest it should some day go mad, and he should thereupon become so too, for the gallant ex-captain's philosophy hardly comprised the latest improvements. And Carlyon having procured a fishing-rod, the master of Aspen borrowed it, and wasted a good deal of time and objurgation upon the impracticable fishes of the Severn; but paying little regard to the advice of the "Complete Angler" (except as to "avoiding small liquors, especially water"), he did not do much in aid of the Aspen larder, and rather ill-naturedly insinuated "silver hooks," while Mrs. Wilmslow was actually helping him to slices from the victims of the more skilful Bernard's cob-flies and red hackles. He yawned about the house a good deal, shouted and roared along the gallery and in the hall, with no

particular motive, pushed one of the red-armed servant girls into the little pool in the garden, and nearly quarrelled with Carlyon for declining to order down a billiard-table. But altogether Henry Wilmslow, humanised in the quiet and wholesome life of the country, and considering how utterly devoid he was of mental resources, and how dependent he had always been upon theatres, gambling-houses, billiard-rooms, and other estimable establishments, for his means of killing time, behaved a good deal better than certain personages in this story expected he would do.

Miss Emma and Miss Kate were very exultant in their new sphere. They saw their mother happy, or at least cheerful and content, and that was an immense thing for them. And then they found never-ceasing occupation in the great house and noble garden; and they experienced a sense of freedom and comfort which had been denied them in the confined homes in which their earlier life had been passed. They grew fresher and prettier every day, I believe. It is not for me to say how they amused themselves, or what families of pets they gathered round them; for though I might mention the doves, and the rabbits, and the owl that came down the chimney, and the fawn that Carlyon bought from a gamekeeper, and the young peacock respectfully presented by

red Martha's aunt, and the kittens which belonged to the lean wild cat that lived in the hole of a tree behind the house, I should forget at least as many other in-door pensioners of the young ladies of Aspen. It was some time, however, before poor little Amy, formerly the lightest-hearted of all, recovered her old spirits, and entered into her sisters' pursuits with the zeal natural to her. If the occasion had not been matter for regret, it would have been charming to see the continuous and self-denying affection with which the elder girls tended the younger one, and how earnestly and delicately they strove to win her interest for their own innocent pleasures. Until Amy was well enough to join their walks, their gardening, or their little excursions, not the brightest day, not the most tempting ramble, could keep Emma's blue eyes or Kate's brown hair far from Amy's pillow. It was pleasant to watch them in their daily attempts to enlist their sister's regards for some favourite or other—how Emma would insist on the fawn's accomplishments being recognised by Amy, while Kate was pathetic in her appeals in favour of the owl, because she declared it resembled herself—and how Amy was implored to get well while the ring-dove was sitting, because it was imperatively necessary she should see it, but the cage must not be moved. And when Amy did get well, and joined them, at first with a

sort of timidity, but with a gradually-increasing enjoyment, I do not believe that these two foolish young ladies had an idea of being happier than when they were bringing out the roses on the cheek of their little pet sister. I have already had to apologise for some of the people in my story, and I rather think I shall have to apologise for them all before I have done; but what can I say for these Wilmslow girls, except that it was not their fault that they had not lived in a world where they might have become "fast," and have had stair-case flirtations, and have cracked French *bon-bons* with French morals inside, and have taken a good deal of champagne, and have had clandestine meetings, and "letters left at the pastry-cook's," and have been spoken of familiarly by evil young gentlemen at the club, who would, approvingly, have called them "larky." I am sorry they are so slow, but I trust we shall get into livelier company before long.

Bernard remained at Aspen. Having written to Mr. Molesworth to know when he should return to town, he received a brief reply from Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge, stating that a remittance had been lodged to his credit at a bank in Bristol, and that he was to write again when that was exhausted. It is not probable that he found life at Aspen very disagreeable, though the Ambassador was not precisely the host he would have

desired: but it was always pleasant to hear Jane Wilmslow's voice, and the girls liked Bernard exceedingly. No one seemed to think his prolonged visit a strange affair; the documents in the muniment-room were a sort of excuse for his stay; but, in truth, he was very welcome. To Jane, for his kindness of manner, and for the services he was enabled to render her;—to the young ladies, because they could talk very pleasantly with him, because he had made them an aviary, helped them in *Tasso*, and given them sound advice as to the education of some squirrels;—to the Ambassador, because, as the latter phrased it, he could talk to Carlyon as a man of the world, and we know what that means when such people as Henry Wilmslow say it. One day, however, the talk in question desperately disgusted the man of the world, and no wonder. It was characteristic of the Ambassador. Carlyon had remarked how much better Amy was looking, and how she was getting over her fright, of which of course Wilmslow had heard the details.

“Ah! master lawyer!” said Wilmslow; “don’t do it again, except with the servants or somebody of that sort. You young fellows will be up to your games, and if you had only sent one of those big-armed wenches into your skeleton’s room, it would have been a great lark, but the child couldn’t stand it.”

Bernard, upon this charming little speech, grew so white with wrath and fury, that Mrs. Wilmslow, who had heard it with exceeding pain, actually slipped behind her husband, and held up her finger, unseen by Wilmslow, with an imperative signal to Carlyon to hold his tongue. He instantly, as became a gentleman, mastered his anger by a mighty effort, hastily mustering all the contemptuous thoughts in the world as a further excuse for silence, but he rather glared at the Ambassador, and then left the room.

"The fellow is a helpless fool, as well as a coarse-minded scoundrel," said Bernard, as soon as he got beyond the reach of Mrs. Wilmslow's magnetizing finger. And with this gentle analysis of his host's character, he snatched up his fishing-rod and tackle, and went out of the house,—not precisely the "simple and patient man" which *Venator*, in the immortal Walton, had "always looked that an angler should be."

CHAPTER IX.

MR. BERNARD CARLYON AND HIS FISHING-ROD.

CARLYON made for the river at as hasty a pace as if he were a schoolboy eager to wet his line, but the gentle sport had no great place in his thoughts. None of us like to be completely misunderstood, even by those whose understandings we are unchristian enough to despise utterly, but when such people offer us patronising advice, we do, at least while young, run a risk of losing our temper. However, there are few things like a brisk walk in the fresh air for restoring to us our calm and proper contempt for our enemies, and as Bernard proceeded with a springy walk, and an occasional flourish of the sheath containing the joints of his rod, he speedily convinced himself that it really did him honour that Mrs. Wilmslow should appreciate him, and that her husband should not. But that *he*—he should, once in his life, be charged with a brutal practical joke, and upon a pretty little confiding child—and then he indulged in some theological speculations as to the reason why such animals as Wilmslow were permitted in this world.

He struck off across the lawn and in the direction of a small clump of trees, it could scarcely be called a coppice, which stood on a slight eminence, and through which was the shortest way to the bend in the river, at which he had several times been fortunate with his rod. The trees were leafless, but their trunks were a good deal masked by some bushy underwood, and a slightly worn footpath wound towards them from a small gate in the iron fence which defined the boundary of the lawn, rather than divided it from the adjacent meadow. The path reached the clump of trees, and then disappeared, as if when out of sight of the mansion, those who traversed the park had taken their own various ways through the little wood. Bernard turned to his left, where the underwood was rather thicker than elsewhere, and sprang briskly over the ground, with a view, perhaps, of expending the surplus remains of the energy called out by the Ambassador, but which would not be very useful on the river's bank.

As he made his way onwards, the March breeze blowing somewhat briskly towards him, he fancied that he heard voices at no great distance, and pausing to listen, a coarse, derisive laugh came roughly on the wind.

“ Some of these poachers, I suppose,” he said, “ whom the Aspen people encouraged, to the indignation of their neighbours. I wonder

whether that system is to go on under the new owners?"

But, pursuing his way, he heard the laugh again, and immediately after it, the unmistakable sound of a female voice, in earnest expostulation, however, rather than terror. A few more steps, and the accent told him that a lady was speaking—he hastened in the direction of the sound.

On a spot a little clear of underwood, and from the higher part of which Aspen Court could be seen through a gap in the trees, was a group of three persons. Two of these were men. The taller was a lean, muscular man, dressed in that mingled costume of gamekeeper, poacher, and tramp, which any one who has lived in an agricultural district will instantly recognise with the aid of those words. His frayed velveteen jacket was not in holes, and his discoloured hat was far from being in bad condition, but it was the grey stockings and the ankle-boots, where gaiters should have been, which told the experienced eye that it, or that of the rural police, ought to be kept upon the fellow. The other man was shorter and stouter, wore a smock-frock, and a slouch hat, and his dirty face and flattened nose had a sort of comic stolidity. The keen black eyes of the taller man, and his dark, fleshless face, bespoke the superior intellect. It was obviously not he who had laughed.

The third member of the group was a young lady, over whose singular loveliness Carlyon had little time to pause. She wore a plain blue cloth dress, which lent itself to her exquisite figure, and a small low hat, which had fallen back from her head, left a profusion of golden curls in some disarray. This Bernard noted at a glance, and some reminiscence of one of Guido's sweet saints may have flitted across his mind at the instant, but he could not wait to fix it. She was standing; an upturned camp-stool and a sketch-book on the ground showed her occupation, and that she had been rudely disturbed in it. A slight silver chain was round her neck, and to it was affixed some object clasped by the lean brown hand of the taller man—one of the white hands of the young lady herself sought to keep the chain together, and to prevent his jerking it away. Carlyon's approach had not been heard, the wind blowing from the group, and as he came upon it, the backs of the two men were towards him.

She did not seem terrified, but was earnestly entreating that the ornament might not be taken from her. She had offered them ten times its value, and she held out a little bead-sprinkled purse in the hand which was not upon the chain. At the moment of Carlyon's arrival, the shorter man dexterously snatched the purse from her hand, and met her look of surprise and entreaty

with another of the laughs which had caught the ear of Bernard. He looked at the sheath of rods he held, which made no light weapon.

"Two to one," he said between his teeth, "so the one need not go through the fencing salute."

The sheath waved in the air, the lady uttered a cry, and the taller ruffian, felled by a tremendous and well-aimed blow on the side of his head, dropped on the ground before her, actually snapping the chain as he went down. Carlyon, seeing that one enemy was safe, advanced upon the other, who, awakening to a lively sense of his position, turned to run. It was the worst thing he could have done, for, light and active as was Bernard, the stout rustic, had he closed, would have been an awkward antagonist. But in mere agility he was no match for Carlyon, especially being encumbered with his smockfrock, and, after the briefest race, a stroke on the leg brought him headlong on the turf, and the next moment Bernard's hand in his handkerchief, with that masterly and mastering leverage in which the knuckles do such good work. Perhaps he had learned the knack from a confidential detective.

"Do you mean to strangle me, master?" demanded the panting prisoner.

"I don't know at present," replied Bernard, retaining his grasp with his left hand, but allowing the man to rise. "Now," he said, showing him

the sheath of rods, "if you resist, or try to get off, down you go beside your friend. Do you understand?"

"Well, you puts it plain enough," said the man, not without a sort of humour. "But I reckon you've broke my leg."

"Nothing of the kind," replied Carlyon, "but if I had broken your neck, you deserved it. Come this way." And he brought him back to the spot where his comrade still lay. The young lady, who had become very pale, looked at Carlyon with a sort of tremor, and he hastened to reassure her.

"Nothing," he said, "but the extreme necessity of the case could justify this little violence under your eyes, and I now feel that even that necessity is no apology. But you have been robbed; may I act for you?"

His tone, and the promptitude with which he had come to her relief, had some weight with her. I do not know whether she noticed that her champion was a distinguished looking young man, whose very respectful manner could not quite disguise his admiration, though he did his best to preserve a gentlemanly composure, and even turned on his prisoner with an extra-sternness, because he found his own eyes inclined to linger on the young lady's face.

"Pray, pray do not think of that," she said;

"out this poor wretch, he is, I fear, dangerously hurt."

The stout man looked at his prostrate comrade with attention.

"He'll do," he said.

"He is better off than he deserves to be," was Carlyon's hasty interpretation of the brief decision, of the accuracy of which he satisfied himself by closely observing the fallen man. "Do not think of him. Except the purse, which I saw this fellow snatch from you—"

"Suppose we don't say nothing about the purse, master," said the captured man in what he meant for an insinuating tone. "Here be the purse, if so be as you'll accept it."

"If I will accept it, you rascal," said Carlyon, who was much too angry with the man to see anything ludicrous in the phraseology.

"He means to make restitution," interposed the young lady, taking the purse with a rather singular seriousness, "and we must not refuse him permission. Perhaps he is already sorry for what he has done?"

"Mortal sorry, my lady," whined the fellow, "and humbly asks your pardon, hoping you'll mercifully look over that which is amiss, and steadfastly purposes to lead a new life through the grace of our—"

"Hold your canting tongue," cried the greatly

scandalized Carlyon, giving the penitent a shake. "You've been in gaol to some purpose, I see, and you shall be back again in another hour. But," he said, addressing the lady, "as your purse is here, and the ornament, which I will take in a moment from that fellow's grasp — is there anything else which they have taken?"

"Nowt, whatsoever," said the prisoner, "which is as true as a mile of Bibles."

"There is nothing else," said the young lady; "pray release this man."

In an instant Bernard withdrew his hand, and as instantly the prisoner sprang off, and rushed away at his best speed, tucking up his smock-frock as he fled, and speedily gaining a distance which would have rendered him safe even had Carlyon thought of chasing him.

But Bernard had no thought for him, or indeed for anything but the beautiful girl before him, and what he could say or do to improve his position with her. And usually ready and self-possessed as he was, he actually hesitated over his words, thought of three or four forms of speech, and having chosen one, decided that it was the worst, and kept convincing himself, and making himself uncomfortable with the conviction, that he was being awkward, or too forward, or too shy, or anything but what he wished to be. Yet why he should have felt embarrassed it seemed hard

to say. A gentler face than looked on him, a sweeter voice than thanked him for his chivalry, could not have been found. A delicately fair complexion, regular, but soft features, eyes—nobody can ever describe eyes—but the foolish phrase of “melting blue” is as near as we are likely to get, and it *is* a foolish phrase, for these eyes could sparkle,—a flush which went and came like a rosy shadow,—and then all those light and silky curls, falling from the perfect little head,—a symmetrical figure, rather above the ordinary height, and the snowy hands, of which mention has been made, these were among the charming things which seemed to suspend Mr. Bernard Carlyon’s powers of fluent utterance, just when he most required them. It may be that his hesitation served him better than a flood of words might have done, and at any rate, one of the prettiest smiles in the world, which finished Carlyon’s business for ever and ever, seemed to imply that, at all events, while stammering out his regrets, and his hopes, and his inquiries, with a raised colour and an earnest face, he was giving no very serious offence.

When I look back upon this last paragraph, and see what an important moment in the life of Bernard Carlyon is thus recorded, I begin to doubt whether I ought not to cancel what I have written, and say the same thing with less levity,

appending some metaphysical dissertations upon the influence thus suddenly exercised upon the young man's being. Also, I see that I have thrown away a good opportunity of using a great many adjectives and epithets full of "colour," which I might have employed in stating not only what this young female person did resemble, but what she did not. "To review this tale," says Fad-ladeen, "it is necessary first to consider all the stories that have ever been written." To describe this lady's beauty, says many a modern Feramorz, it is necessary also to alude to every other kind of beauty which has ever been painted. Well, we must see what we can do by-and-by; in the meantime, I hope I have said enough to justify Carlyon for being most mightily fascinated at the shortest notice.

He contrived, after a little while, to make the young lady understand that as she must have been much agitated by what had taken place, he would suggest her coming on to Aspen Court, where she would find a lady who would give her the warmest welcome, as it was hardly necessary for him to say, especially when—that was — under the circumstances; and again it became slightly difficult to report the speaker very coherently.

"I do not think I should be very welcome to Mrs. Wilmslow," said the lady, smiling, "or that

you would be very much thanked for bringing me to Aspen."

Both of these propositions seemed at that moment so monstrous to Bernard, that he felt quite indignant, but he managed to dispute them with some little grace.

"You would agree with me if you knew me," replied the stranger. "And you will recal your invitation, when I tell you that I am Lilian Trevelyan."

"Miss Trevelyan," repeated Bernard, slowly.

"You had no idea of that, Mr. Carlyon," said the young lady, "had you, when you became my champion? Perhaps," she added, archly, "if you had known me, you might not have thought it so proper for you to engage in my defence?"

"I had no idea of it," said Bernard, thoughtfully. His hesitation had utterly departed, but in his voice there was now a trouble of a graver kind.

"So you see," she continued, in the same tone, "it is I who ought to express regrets for having enlisted the able services of my—enemy." She used the word, but she used it in a tone that deprived it of the slightest claim to its ordinary meaning. Nor did Carlyon seem to notice the expression.

"You knew me, then, Miss Trevelyan?" he asked.

"We have few strangers here, you know," she replied. "But I have no mysteries, at least none," she added more gravely, "that I can avoid. You have turned us out of the old house—"

"I," said the young man, deprecatingly.

"Nay, you know that you were most keen and industrious in discovering the reasons why the law ought to expel the poor Trevelyan, is it not so? Well, I wished for a memorial of our lost home, and I have for the last three or four days ventured into the domain, to complete a few sketches from different points. You happened to cross the lawn yesterday, and I learned your name from an old tenant who has hitherto accompanied me, and with whose attendance I dispensed to-day, not very fortunately."

"Most fortunately," said Carlyon, "if the occurrence gives you no further annoyance. If I felt delighted, before you mentioned your name, that I had chanced to arrive here, I hope you will believe that I am using no words of compliment, in saying that I feel deeply honoured in having been able to render Miss Trevelyan this slight service." He spoke from his heart, and his voice was earnest but not calm.

"If you will be so ceremonious," said the lady, "I must prepare a pretty speech in reply, for which you must give me time, because——. Ah!"

she exclaimed, "I am forgetting this poor man, while I laugh ;" and she hastened to the fallen robber, whom Bernard had placed against a tree, and who was now giving symptoms of returning animation.

"I will attend to him," said Carlyon ; "he shall be taken into the house. Let me restore what he endeavoured to take from you." And forcing open the man's still clenched hand, he took from it a small golden crucifix, to which the severed chain was fastened.

"I regret," he said, presenting it to Miss Trevelyan, "that it should have been profaned by his ruffian clutch."

"Do not say that," said Lilian, becoming very serious. "Do you observe what it is ?"

"Surely," replied Carlyon.

"Will you tell me what you call it ?"

He looked a little surprised, but answered,

"A Christian symbol. Something more, I believe, to some Christians."

"But to yourself ? Speak to me frankly."

"A work of art," he replied. A slight shudder passed through Lilian Trevelyan, which he observed, and instantly added, "If I have learned to see nothing more in that which you hold, and you would have me see more—"

"Ah ! silence," said Lilian, imploringly ; "you

do not know of what mysteries you are speaking so lightly."

"I know at least," said Bernard, "that I would speak or think lightly of nothing which you hold dear." It was very early in their acquaintance for him to make this strong declaration, but he had been a little surprised into it by seeing that he had given her pain.

"It would be for your good if I held you to that pledge," said Lilian, without the slightest hesitation, or coquetry. "But when I tell you that I am one of those Christians who, as you say, see far more in this holy symbol than others do, that, in a word, I am a Catholic, you will be grateful, perhaps, that I am not a proselytiser. But do not let us speak on such matters—at least, not now."

"Not now." Small words, few letters, but what a mass of comfort did that foolish Carlyon seize from them. They meant that he and Lilian were to meet again, to speak again, to speak seriously, too, which proved—but I suppose we all know this process of growing forests out of mustard-seeds.

"This crucifix," she continued, "is very dear to me, for reasons, which, perhaps, ought not to enhance the value of such an object. I could not bear to part with it to a robber; and yet had I

done so I should have done rightly," she said, musingly.

"To have encouraged him to a new outrage upon some other helpless person," said Carlyon. "You see chance decided more justly than you would have done, and vengeance came upon him at the moment it was due."

"And who are we that we should deal vengeance?" she asked, almost sadly. "But do not think me unthankful for your courage and kindness, which I shall never forget. And now," said Lilian, her sweet face again lighting up with her smile, "as I do not hear you renew your offer to take me to Mrs. Wilmslow's, I must make for a humbler shelter. I have a little pony stalled not very far off, and he will be glad to see his mistress, though he does not expect her so soon."

"You will let me accompany you to his stable," said Carlyon, quite as eagerly as there was any necessity for speaking. "That other rogue may not be out of the woods, and here is your camp-stool to be carried, and your drawing-book; besides, you may still be agitated by what has occurred, and you ought not to be alone."

"All excellent reasons," said Lilian, laughing, "but there is a better why you should stay—the poor man of whom you have promised to take care."

"I have loosened his cravat," said Carlyon;

“the fresh air for an hour is exactly the treatment he most requires. I will then come back to him, or send the constables. Even though you should not care to appear against him, he shall go to prison for the present. By the way, it might not be amiss—” and he looked round for a means of securing the fellow should he attempt to escape.

“No,” said Miss Trevelyan, “promise me two things, that you will do all that is necessary for him, and that you will then let him go.”

“You have only to command,” said Carlyon. “But you have not, I am afraid, studied the principles of justice.”

“Perhaps I have, and at its fountain,” returned Lilian. “But whether or not, you will do me these favours?”

“Imagine them done,” said Bernard, “as they shall assuredly be. If I might ask one—I will not say in return—because there is nothing to be returned—but—” and his eye fell on the broken chain which Lilian still held.

“You are looking at my poor chain,” said she.

“You can hardly,” said the artful Bernard, “get it repaired in this neighbourhood. But I am constantly riding over to Bristol. Will you allow me to take it to a jeweller’s there? It shall be completed as expeditiously as possible; indeed I will wait for it and then transmit it to you.”

“Where?” said Miss Lilian, smiling; for you need not suppose, young ladies, that though as innocent as yourselves, she had not your charming instinct. And I think that question-answer served you right, Mr. Carlyon.

“To the care of the pony, if you like,” he answered, laughing.

“Ah! but perhaps the pony will come here no more, or his mistress either,” said Lilian. “But it is very thoughtful of you, and so here is the chain, and you shall be told where to send it to me.”

“Or to bring it to you,” risked Carlyon, venturesomely.

“If you like,” said Lilian, frankly. “Only you will meet some very strange people if you come.”

Carlyon stifled the answer which he felt inclined to make, and replied with due discretion. And accompanying Miss Trevelyan to a cottage at no great distance from a boundary of the Aspen Court estate, but not, as Lilian specially mentioned, upon it, he found the cottager holding an active little Shetland pony, and with difficulty preventing it from eating down the monthly roses from the wall. Bernard privately scoffed at the animal, as all unworthy of such a rider, and thought, of the splendid, high-couraged, gentle, shining horse he should like to help

her to mount. But he forgave the small Shetlander, for affording him the opportunity of feeling Lilian's little foot upon his hand, as she sprang to her seat. He then wondered whether she was going to shake hands with him, and was greatly delighted when she held out her pretty, white, warm fingers, and said a few words of thanks and farewell. And then the pony's hoofs went tapping and clattering along the road at a capital pace, and Carlyon, looking earnestly after Lilian, could see her ringlets lightly lifted by the wind as she went away.

He returned towards the clump of trees, pondering many things, and occasionally stopping and meditating leisurely, and then walking fast for a few minutes, and so on, until he came back to the scene of the robbery. To his surprise he found that the thief had taken Dogberry's hint, shown himself what he was, and stolen himself out of the company. He was gone, and Carlyon, not altogether sorry to lose sight of him, concluded that the other rogue had watched for the departure of Lilian and Bernard, and had then helped off his disabled comrade.

CHAPTER X.

WHY MR. CHEQUERBENT DID NOT KEEP HIS APPOINTMENT.

MR. PAUL CHEQUERBENT, as hath been shown, duly failed to meet Carlyon at the railway station, on the evening when the latter departed for Aspen Court. Aware of the uncertain habits of Paul, Bernard was not much surprised, but concluding that Chequerbent would, in time, make his appearance, abstained from writing to town until it seemed necessary to do so, especially as he was anxious not to bring another of Paul's misde-meanours under the notice of Mr. Molesworth. But four or five days having passed, and no tidings of Chequerbent having been received, Carlyon wrote to Mr. Lobb, asking him to find out privately whether Paul had suddenly emigrated, or been made a Secretary of State, or fallen through a coal-hole into a cellar, casualties to which all persons are exposed in these strange times. Lobb wrote in reply that nothing had been heard of Chequerbent at the office, that he had obtained from Linnery (to whom he owed much too large a balance) funds for the journey, and that it seemed probable Paul *had* intended to

start, inasmuch as he had made appointments for several small creditors to call on him upon a day, when he knew he should be a long way off, and that such small creditors had called accordingly, and had been particularly savage, one of them, especially, refusing to go away until Mr. Molesworth himself came in, and haughtily ordered the man into the charge of a police-constable, "a case of *Deus intersit*," added Mr. Lobb (a great quoter of Horace), "where the *nodus* was not *vindice dignus*, and which, if not *decies repetita*, has occurred so often that decidedly *non placebit*." This kind of inlaid writing, by the way, is considered remarkably witty by some people, who very properly look contemptuously at hack citations from the author of *Macbeth*.

Still Bernard determined, if possible, to avoid getting Paul into any further scrape, and, in writing to Mr. Molesworth, he refrained from any allusion to his absence, each day expecting to welcome him to the haunted muniment-room. But he came not, and there was no letter. Then Lobb was asked by Carlyon to go to Paul's lodgings, but the report thence was, that he had left word that he was going into the country, and had *not* left the amount of the eleven weeks' bills already due, a financial statement which the land-lady accompanied with some terse animadversions on such a line of policy, as tending to disturb

that confidence, which, as between man and man (leastways, between man and woman, which was, she justly remarked, virtuously the same), so materially promoted a good understanding in this world. Some inquiries at a few of Mr. Paul's favourite haunts produced very similar replies in both respects, a confiding waiter at one of Chequerbent's "houses of call," informing Mr. Lobb that Paul had, on the day of his disappearance, increased his large debt, on the waiter's faith in Chequerbent's statement that he was going off to Gloucestershire to take possession of an estate which had been left him, and on Paul's off-hand intimation that, as he should soon be settling, he should want a butler to look after his wine. It was Paul's way to talk in this manner, and he fancied that the people he deluded for the moment forgot his inventions as fast as he did.

But Paul had not gone after gold, or coals, or received an invitation from his sovereign, not even that indirect one which Carlyon thought might possibly account for his absence. At the moment of promising to join Bernard at the station, Paul actually forgot an engagement to which he had looked forward for weeks, and of which he was reminded immediately afterwards. For ten Aspen Courts he would not have broken it, but it would not do, he knew, to say this in the office. His mind was very fruitful in excuses,

and a simple course suggested itself. He would keep his privately cherished engagement, and start for Aspen next day, alleging that he had missed the night-train, in consequence of the cabman taking the wrong road, or the horse falling down dead, or a thief having run off with his portmanteau, or for all three reasons at once, if anybody questioned him. But who would, except Carlyon, and he was safe enough? So Mr. Chequerbent made the various arrangements we have heard of from various quarters, and laid himself out for a night of joy and a day of travel. For, lightly as Paul had spoken of Mr. Lobb's young lady friends, and reckless as had been the dogma he had propounded touching the use of plain girls, he had, in his way, suffered a good deal at the hands of the sex of whom he talked so carelessly. And, at the present moment, Paul was slave to a very nice Virginia.

Where is "the spot on which Hicks' Hall formerly stood?" Until Mr. Peter Cunningham was so good as to make Londoners acquainted with their own city, and to convert a street-lounge into an historical tour, this was one of the insoluble problems, malevolently poked at well-informed people, just as poor Sir Egerton Brydges used to ask his friends, "Who was Ida of Hapsburg?" or as Charles Lamb would stave off an infliction of sham enthusiasm about Shakspeare,

by demanding very earnestly, "But why did wild Halfcan stab Potts?" But we know all about it now, and also that from Hicks' Hall came the Clerkenwell Sessions to their present locality, a quarter to which (with all apologies to genteel people) we must go, if we intend to trace the wanderings of Mr. Paul Chequerbent. In our younger days, the route from Christendom into Clerkenwell lay through a sort of labyrinth, bounded by gigantic brewhouses, whose windows were always pouring out steaming cataracts of grains, and with its narrow streets terribly crowded with affable and voluble venders of whelks, fried fishes, valentines in umbrellas, onions, hot eels, cotton braces, periwinkles, Seven Dials ballads, snapping extinguishers, whey, tracts, and about every other individual article in the world which one would wish to abstain from eating, drinking, using, or perusing. But a mighty cut has laid Clerkenwell open to the Thames breezes, and nothing more disagreeable than those gales need now be encountered in one's way.

Just about the time when he ought to have been making for the Paddington terminus, did Mr. Paul Chequerbent set forth, carpet-bag in hand, for Clerkenwell, and while Carlyon was walking up and down the platform, scrutinizing each new arrival, in the expectation of finding his intended travelling companion, the latter, in an

attic of a large old house, the dingy ways of which he seemed to know well, was dressing himself with great splendour for a ball about to take place a few floors lower. Standing back from one of the streets near the area of the Sessions House, was this mansion, which had been built in days when people could afford elbow-room, and around which the meaner houses and shops of the present day clustered and jammed in an ugliness as irregular as if it fancied itself picturesque. The large old house held back, letting the *parvenus* push forward up to the very pathway, and seemed to keep its large, dark, grass-grown front-court empty and useless, in contempt of the costly frontages measured out inch by inch to the plebeian shopkeepers right and left of it. There was its portico, with some tumid fruits and flowers carved in front, and strenuously asserted by a young district-surveyor to be the work of Grinling Gibbons, on the strength of a G. which he discovered cut in one of the pillars,—very ample evidence, indeed, compared with what has assigned many tons of wooden roses to that industrious artist. For the rest, the house had not much to boast of, for the wealthy class of merchants, by one of whose members it had been built, had long abandoned that quarter; and the building, having become successively a school, an auction-warehouse, and an hospital, was finally let in such fragments as

might suit the convenience of tenants, whom the owners were glad to get on any terms. This arrangement made the geography of the house rather complicated. A set of milliner sisters had the front room to the left, and the second floor back. The drawing-room floor was occupied by a gentleman who made pickles, and dark stories were current of the sprats that went into those room sprats, but came out fine Gorgona anchovies, and of handfuls of halfpence obtained from the churchwardens of the parish, after a collection, to be boiled with the gherkins, to give them a fine green colour. The second floor right, was a small school, where small children of both sexes came and sat, and sneezed, and shivered in draughts, and looked sadly at one another, and had no pocket-handkerchiefs, and scarcely received as much attention from their sour-visaged mistress, the tipsy wife of an insolvent coal and potato merchant (but then anybody is qualified to keep a school in England) as might be expected for the hebdomadal fourpence. The room on the opposite side of the landing was held by another gentleman, who called himself a bird-fancier, but the discerning Mr. Bishop of Bond Street had once found means to convince a magistrate that Mr. Glink's genius for dog-stealing was not quite uncultivated, and he was also favourably known, at certain sporting taverns in the neighbourhood,

as always having a very choice selection of rats ready, at the shortest notice, for any terrier eager to display his talents. The little room behind his was held by a young lady who sang at the Polyhymnia Saloon, and who made great plaints of her neighbour's rats; and another room, between hers and that of the milliners, was the place where a monthly nurse snored, when not snoring in the white arm-chairs of nuptial bowers. Of the attics up-stairs it might be more difficult to give an account, they were variously appropriated among the tenantry, and in one of them was Mr. Paul Chequerbent, beside his yawning *sac de nuit*, taking a very splendid pink and frilled "dicky" (not unlike those mazily cut Valentines one sees in windows) out of the green leathern leg of his patent leather boot, and congratulating himself that his device had saved this magnificent front from being creased. But why?

Those who have the bump of locality—a euphonious synonym with the power of paying reasonable attention to external objects—will have observed that we have passed one important room in the house in Spelton Street. But in entering the mansion this would really have been the apartment most difficult to pass; for while the tenants of the other rooms were strictly limited to small announcements of their names and vocations, by means of tiny labels under their respective bells,

a large brass plate went claspingly round each pillar of the portico, and apprised the world, in boldly blacked capital letters, that here was situate "Mrs. Sellinger's Dancing Academy." Mrs. Sellinger had fought hard for those monumental brasses, which were at first objected to by all the other tenants unless they might be allowed to put up their own emblazonments in like manner; but she was a woman of manner and management, and she not only carried her point as regarded the erection of her plates, but successively won over every person in the house to consent to let them remain uncomd anioned. How she contrived to do this one can hardly say, but I agree with Mr. Cobden in having a high appreciation of diplomacy: and whether Mrs. Sellinger gave some gratuitous lessons to the excitable young milliners; or got some of her pupils to manage that the ex-small-coal woman should have their little brothers and sisters to neglect; or lent herself to some flirtation between Miss Mazarine of the Polyhymnia, and a certain philandering subscriber to the Academy, who liked to hear himself called "a gallant gay Lothario" (as is natural at forty-five); or obtained such a hold over Mrs. Basnet, the monthly nurse, in connexion with an embroidered pocket-handkerchief the latter had annexed, from the drawer of a lady who, at the time, was not nearly

so well as could be expected; or vanquished the pickle-merchant by an introduction to an export-house in which Mrs. Sellinger had a cousin; or, finally, subjugated the conscience-stricken rat-merchant by a dashingly delivered threat to have his premises overhauled by the police the next time a dog's whine was heard proceeding thencefrom,—is a multifarious interrogatory which none but a Chancery barrister could affect to answer. Nor does it matter—Mrs. Sellinger won her plates.

Mrs. Sellinger was a handsome woman, somewhat tall, with a full figure, bright dark eyes, and a very white skin, so that in black satin or black velvet she was rather irresistible than not. She was good-natured, and very good-tempered, but had a decided manner, which did not invite opposition, and, being something demonstrative and Italian in her gesture, she rather annoyed and frightened young gentlemen at the age when they have lost the ease of a boy and not obtained that of a man; and this is about the period when a youth goes to a dancing-school. But Mary Sellinger was very winning, and when she let her handsome arm rest on yours, and looked at you earnestly when asking any favour—and she never asked anything very unreasonable—I do not see how you could help promising it, and engaging her for the next waltz. There is this to be said.

Everybody makes a fool of himself or herself, as the case may be. Some people distribute the operation over an entire life. Others do it once, but do it effectually. This was Mary Sellinger's way. Her father was a retired officer, a widower, who had made money, and she would have inherited it, if she had not chosen to run away from a first-rate boarding-school with her very handsome French teacher. I believe, if she had selected, or been selected by, any of the other masters, her father would have forgiven her,—but every person has an antipathy—his was a Frenchman. He discarded her, and in blind vengeance married a girl two years younger than Mary. Monsieur Eugène Saint Léger, finding that there was no money coming, bore with his pretty English wife as long as could be reasonably expected from a fortune-hunter, then beat her, and went to America. Mary, left without a shilling, considered, and then set herself in earnest, and woman's earnest, to the struggle of life. Heavy odds against her living. Heavier, in our civilized and Christian land, against her living honourably, under the circumstances. But she won on both events, and if the profession of a teacher of dancing is not so meritorious as that of a stock-jobber, or a bill-broker, or a railway gambler, or as several other virtuous paths which lead to the honours and coronets of society, still, on the whole, it is harmless. She

had desperately hard work at first, and I am told had pawned nearly all her dresses, and had lived on oatmeal porridge for some time, when the wind changed, and her ships began to come in : small craft at first, but they became more and more numerous, and a large one dropped in occasionally, and brought others in its wake. So, when Chequerbent made the acquaintance of handsome Mrs. Sellinger (she manipulated her husband's name into this ; it was a sort of divorce, and made the word easier for the East-enders), she had a prosperous academy, out of which, between regular subscribers, lessons, and occasional balls, she earned a comfortable living, besides having a little entry made in her favour on Saturday night, between seven and nine o'clock, when (in her old bonnet and cloak, however,) she visited one of those excellent institutions, for which I was very happy to hear Mr. Gladstone say, the other night, that he hoped to be able to legislate. Well, we none of us, I take it, have too much respect to spare for our fellow-creatures, whatever we may think it proper to say by way of encouraging virtuous actions, as our copy-books command. But I suppose we can afford a little for a beautiful young woman, who, abandoned by her natural protectors, and untrained for the world's battle, does, nevertheless, fight it courageously, through hardship and privation, and in a deteriorating

atmosphere of vulgarity, and actually manages to keep out of vice and off the books of the parish.

This night there was to be one of Mrs. Sellinger's best balls, when not only was there expected a brilliant muster of her habitual supporters, but it had been currently reported, on the practice evenings, that some new gentlemen (I fear the Clerkenwell ladies called them *beaux*) were to grace the assembly. Moreover, Mrs. Sellinger and some favourite pupils were to introduce, for the first time, a celebrated new dance, which she had been studying at the West End under the direction of Monsieur Lycomède, of the Opera. This gifted artist had providentially discovered the dance at a rural festivity in the very heart of the Black Forest, and, without pausing to jot down the figure, had hurried to several small Grand Ducal Courts with it, where it had created such a *furore* that he was obliged to give midnight lessons to the courtiers, and was even detected in teaching the dance to an archbishop in the organ-loft. Taking exceeding care that the public should know of all this, through wonderful paragraphs in the Continental papers, M. Lycomède made his way to Paris, and having christened his dance by an utterly impracticable German name, bribed a manager to found a *vaudeville* upon it, and a novelist to make it the subject of a series of *feuilletons*, it acquired an unparalleled reputation,

and of course became an English necessity. M. Lycomède was teaching it night and day in Charles Street, but he found time to impart it to his sister-professional, Mrs. Sellinger, the more easily that, with a shrug and a whisper, he made her understand that the *Scheinheiligfeit* was merely an old English country-dance, with a slight variation in the order of figures—but there was no necessity for either of them to talk about *that*.

Paul was a great favourite of Mrs. Sellinger's. To speak the truth, he was one of her most aristocratic patrons, for the majority of her pupils and friends resided either in the immediate neighbourhood of Spelton Street, or in the Goswell Street Road and its dependencies, or down somewhere in the city. Necessarily, the Sellinger Assembly was a mixed gathering, in which trade was largely represented, chiefly in its retail interest, though three or four gentlemen, of very different ages and figures, who were engaged during the day in keeping accounts in city warehouses, were held to introduce the wholesale element, and Mrs. Sellinger did not forget the fact, when dilating to a new friend on the advantages of her establishment. But Paul Chequerbent lived in the far west, went to the Opera, and spoke as familiarly of the Honourable Jimmies, and Viscount Pollys, as if he knew them a bit better than any of the snobs who used to learn those affectionate nicknames

from the "Satirist." And though Paul had not the least business in this world to go to that Clerkenwell dancing-school, seeing that he was by birth and connexion entitled to associate with a different class of society, he was very fond of going there, first, because he liked Mrs. Sellinger, for which I do not blame him ; next, because he liked to swagger and be lionized, for which I am afraid to blame him, lest I should be supposed to gird at some other persons ; and lastly, and chiefly, because at this period he was very tenderly attached to a young lady of the minor theatrical profession, who called herself, and incited managers to call her, Angela Livingstone, and against whom the worst thing that could justly be said was, that her parents persisted in calling her Ann, and in signing themselves Lump. In this last liking of Mr. Chequer-bent's I do not know whether to blame him or not. Miss Livingstone, *née* Lump, was very pretty, and as her talent lay a good deal in the personation of pages, fairies, and other hybrid creations, whose frocks are cut off at their knees, there is no objection to one's saying what a thousand people said, or thought, every night, namely, that her figure was very neat, and her legs were excellent.

And now we come upon delicate ground, as people say who talk slip-slop, and mean that they are about to speak on a subject which admits of objectionable treatment. It will naturally be

asked, what were the regards entertained by Mr. Chequerbent towards this pretty Miss Livingstone. He thought of her a great deal, wrote her hundreds of letters, made her give him a lock of her black hair (which he wore in his pocket-book); he attended her performances whenever he could, applauding her speeches, and dances, and songs, until, sometimes, the audiences jeered him. He sent her presents, not very expensive ones perhaps, but a long series of small ones, which women pretend to like better, because they say it is evidence that you are constantly thinking of them. He waited for her at the stage-door after the performances, till all the ballet and chorus, who undress and redress, *pour cause*, a good deal faster than the principals, knew him, and would say, "Down directly," and laugh as they went home to their cheese and onions. He would escort her home, taking a cab if it rained, and would do, in fact, for the young lady, who had two pounds a-week at the East-end houses, exactly what tall Lord Toadstool, and red Sir Lepidus Pump before him, and that handsome young Sammy Spoonington after him, did in their fashion (and they were all fashionable wiseacres), in the case of Mademoiselle Ambrosine, of the *Gymnase*, who, by the way, very properly ruined them all three. So they need not laugh at Paul. I am wrong, by the way, in saying they did exactly the same, for

whereas Ann Lump, or Livingstone, was a virtuous good little girl, who supported a drunken old father and a cantankerous mother out of her poor salary, Mademoiselle Ambrosine's morals were French. But then the question was this. Neither Paul nor Angela for a moment thought of anything which they ought not to have thought of—that is to be distinctly understood; for Paul, though a goose, was not a bad fellow, and Ann, as I have said, was perfectly proper. But then he certainly never dreamed of marrying her. His guardian, his haughty relations in the country, and even his own sense of the fitness of things—the idea, however, was never seriously entertained by him. Then what on earth did he thus devote himself to the girl for, and why did she permit his attentions? That is the question which Paul sometimes asked himself, but as he could not give it an answer, it is hardly to be expected that I should. What an orderly world this would be if we were all of us ready with a good reason for everything we do!

Of course, it was no business of Mrs. Sellinger's to interfere, and if Angela Livingstone came to every practice-evening, quadrille-night, and ball that her theatrical duties would allow, if only to stay for an hour; and if Paul managed to be aware when she was coming, and always to meet her, and to dance with her preposterously often,

and to go away with her, and so forth, all that the dancing-mistress had a right to remark was, that two of her subscribers attended very regularly. She knew very well, that on this ball-night Angela would be there: and she knew still better that Paul would, inasmuch as that artful party, as he would have called himself, had requested to be permitted to dress himself up-stairs, and had arrived for that purpose, intending at the termination of the festivity, which would probably be prolonged far into the morning, to walk about the streets, with his carpet-bag, until time for the early train for Bristol.

The room filled. Mrs. Sellinger, looking quite Juno-like with her black velvet and white arms, received her guests with a gushing *empressement*, truly comforting to behold. It seemed to make every person believe, that the evening's *fête* was given for that person's express and exclusive gratification. The less distinguished guests came first,—plain and dowdy girls of squab proportions and severity of manner, mostly with dark and high-necked dresses; a lad or two, by no means comfortable, but affecting a grin; and the little girls of the academy, got up with great breadth of sash and stiffness of muslin, but rather given, in their fidgets, to rub the soles of their shoes over the instep of their white socks, to the malignant wrath of their guardians. Mrs. Sellinger had a

kind word for them all, and some reminiscence—for she had a capital memory—which was sure to please the person addressed; one she remembered was so fond of the Spanish dance, and they would have it that night; and another must remember how well he waltzed with her, and a third had made quite an impression by his superior *pastorale*, and so on, with variations for the severe girls, who were only severe, one ought to say, from their exceeding awkwardness and discomfort when required to talk, for they danced most conscientiously. Then came more illustrious guests, some of them parents of pupils; and to what good seats, out of draughts, did Mrs. Sellinger induct them, and how she coincided with their opinions on pleasure, education, climate, and creation generally! More young ladies, in clusters, some pretty ones in simple dresses put on well, and some other pretty ones in expensive dresses, ill made. There was variety in costume, too, from the cheap book-muslin to the costly brocade; and in other matters, also, for while divers of the ladies (chiefly, I regret to say, the scraggy ones, but that is always so) were rather frankly *décolletées*, the dresses of others ran up to the very chin, and even had little frills crowning them, so that there might be no mistake at all. There were pleasant young faces there, some shining with undeniable soap and water, and some (with shoulders appertaining) on

which violet powder had not been puffed in vain. The seats which lined the room became tolerably full, but the ladies had an enormous majority, which was natural, because the *beaux*—I must use the language of the locality—were mostly engaged in their worldly callings until later. But they gradually came in; the proud accountants from the city—the humbler gents from the counter—a fat man in a frock coat—a tall, thin, grave, grey man in brown trousers—an exceedingly spruce druggist, who would, perhaps, have been pleasant as a partner, but for the smell of the rhubarb—a mysterious young man in complete black, whose melancholy was attributed to the rumour of his having killed a man in a duel, an idea he rather encouraged, which made it none the more correct—a proprietor of omnibuses (greatly respected)—a daguerreotypist, who made good business out of his attendance at such assemblies—and Mr. Paul Chequerbent.

He was very gorgeous. You have seen the wonderful pink front and the patent leathers, so you can give more uninterrupted attention to that many-coloured waistcoat, with its gold and glitter, and to the massy electrotyped chain, which falls in a vast inverted arch below. Paul bought this as gold, by the way, the fiction not exceeding the licence which justice has pronounced to belong to trade. His well-made coat contrasts favourably

with the slop-shop garments of most of the other gentlemen; and he has tied on the glistening cravat, with its great lace-ends, in a very artistic style. His gloves fit, and, moreover, are both on, while a good many of the other men have deemed it proper to keep the right glove off, until they have shaken hands with Mrs. Sellinger. Altogether, we may be proud of our Paul's appearance, though he has no business in a Clerkenwell dancing academy.

A fiddle, a cornet-à-piston, and the pianoforte have gone merrily to work, and quadrilles have been danced, and a German waltz (Weber's last) and a *deux temps*, and partners are being taken for the Spanish dance, and Paul is getting into a fidget. Of course you observe why. But where can she be? And had he not sent her up a beautiful bouquet from Mary Johnson's, in wool and a box, with a message to be early? What is she about? And dark visions, with which the tenor singer at the theatre is a little mixed up, rush across Paul's mind, for I believe that Arimanes (if you like a long name for him, but you know what I mean) has never more power with a man, than when a woman is keeping him waiting. If I thought I had the smallest influence with but one lady-reader, I would pray her, married or single, to remember this. But where is Angela?

However, Paul is too brilliant an ornament of

that assembly to be allowed to remain idle; and though he did not much wish to dance, Mrs. Sellinger picked out a pretty partner for him, and he went through the Lancers with comparative composure. Still, no Angela.

The revelry proceeded, but it had no charms for him. He yielded to handsome Mrs. Sellinger's wish, however, and polked with her, the rather that he had an opportunity of murmuring his discontent into her pretty little ear. And she comforted him by assuring him that no doubt Miss Livingstone would come; it was early, and so many little things delayed a girl; her dress wouldn't hook, perhaps, or her mother might have had a fit—he must not worry himself. What a lovely waistcoat, and how kind of him to get it to do honour to their little ball!

Now, Mrs. Sellinger affected not to give supper. But, by an arrangement with the milliners on the other side of the hall, their apartment was, for this night only, and by particular desire, made a sort of refectory, and eating and drinking (I beg to use substantial words, for it was no case of trifles and Moet) began early, and went on steadily, more steadily, perhaps, than some of the gentlemen, who, mopping their foreheads with rather coarse Irish cambric, refreshed themselves with much ale, brandy and water, and other light drinks. Nor were the ladies forgotten by those

who chose to remember them. All articles were paid for on the instant (a formula rendered necessary by certain excise laws); and those who were bounteous treated their partners, and those who were shabby only led them to their places. Bad luck for a simple youth of limited means with one of those shrewd Clerkenwell matrons tacked to his arm.

Still Angela Livingstone came not, and Paul's discomfiture was fast completing. He sought to drown his vexation in the revel, and his care in the bowl. He recklessly asked everybody to dance with him—long, short, ugly, pretty; and as regularly took his partner, nothing loth, into the opposite room for refreshment, which, in his case, meant hot brandy and water. Then he would hurry back, and rush through another wild dance, defying all conventionalities, knocking up against other people, and making himself less popular than conspicuous. He had two or three remonstrances addressed to him—a sneer from a haughty accounting clerk—a “Come, Sir, I say,” from a half-demolished counter-jumper, but he heeded them not, and whirled away in his fiery waltz, as if he were in the arms of one of the terrible Night Dancers, and doomed to gyrate until death.

There was a decided ill-feeling in the room against Paul, and even Mrs. Sellinger began to wish he were away; for not only did he persevere

in his unseemly dancing, but began to "chaff" those around him with great audacity. He knew many of them, and unhesitatingly availed himself of his knowledge to address them in epithets which, however amusing to other persons, are esteemed rather injurious by the individual at whom they are hurled across a quadrille. He reminded the spruce druggist that it was his turn to advance, with the unhandsome hint of "Now, old Pill-boxes, cut in;" and remarking that the fat man in the frock-coat was stumbling over a troublesome story to Mrs. Sellinger, Paul poked him in the ribs, remarking—

"Proceed, sweet warbler, your tale interests her." Nor was another couple, dancing the Caledonians, much edified by Mr. Chequerbent shouting forth—

"The lady in the cork-screws will now set to the gentleman in the knock-knees."

Suddenly there was a modest rap at the great door of the house, and, after some delay, Mrs. Sellinger was called out. When she reappeared, Paul was in the middle of a *cavalier-seul* (a figure much liked at the East-end), and was exciting the indignation of the quadrille by his gestures. Hazy with liquid as he had become, he nevertheless saw that Mrs. Sellinger's eye was upon him, and that she intended to speak to him, and he instantly guessed that she had heard of Angela. Without

the slightest ceremony, or a word to his partner, he dashed across the room, and was by the lady's side.

"She's come?" he asked, in an eager whisper.

"Yes, but not to stay; now pray—" but what Mrs. Sellinger was going to pray for was never known. Paul pulled the door open, driving forward a cluster of people who were standing by it, watching the dancers, and rushed out. Yes, in the hall, there was Angela, but with a bonnet and a black cloak. He sprang to her side.

"Oh, my *dear* Paul," she said, "I am so sorry, but it was not my fault. They never gave me notice that the second piece was changed, and that I should have to play to-night, till I got to the theatre, and—"

"Hang the theatre," cried Paul; "I wish it was burned, with the manager, audience, and company, except you. But here you are; better late than never. Off with your bonnet and cloak, and I'll take you in. We'll have a terrific polka. Will you take some refreshment first?"

"I am afraid you have been taking too much, dear," said the pretty girl, shaking her head. "But I can't come in. I hurried off the instant the curtain was down, to explain, for fear you should think me unkind, and now I must go back. I have a cab."

"Go back, not a bit of it," said Paul, vehe-

mently. "Now you are here, you shall stay, and we'll have some fun. Come," and he dexterously removed her bonnet, and, lo! a beautiful wreath in her hair, of silver leaves and green grapes. "Just the identical thing," said Paul, "that will astonish these Clerkenwell snobs and snobbesses."

"I tell you, Paul," said Angela, earnestly, "you are half-wild. I tell you I did not even stop to dress—see." And she opened her cloak for a moment, and closed it laughingly. "Help me to my cab, there's a good child."

"Devil a bit," cried Mr. Chequerbent. "The Apollo dress, and you look lovely in it, and I'll smash anybody that says you don't." And before the poor girl was well aware of his purpose, he removed her cloak, threw it away, drew her arm under his, and making another dash at the door, on the other side of which a faint scream or two made it clear that he had done awful damage, he hurried her into the very centre of the room, a small boy or two being overthrown in his victorious way.

Now the Apollo dress is a very pretty one, and Angela Livingstone looked very pretty in it. But as a young lady does not generally appear at a private ball with a glittering silver tunic not quite down to her knees, and with her legs in fleshings, and with only a shoulder strap on her arm, the

sensation created, as the actress, blushing and terrified, was brought under the chandelier, and the room crowded round her, was not precisely favourable; the ladies glanced at her legs, and then looked indignant, and the men, when they found that Paul was the cause of the disturbance, looked more indignant than the mere spectacle would have warranted. As for Mrs. Sellinger, she never lost her presence of mind, and hastened up to the group, intending to turn the affair into a joke, and get Paul and the young lady out of the house as quickly as possible.

But before she could speak, two awkward words had reached Paul's ear. The first I will not write, because it is considered an oath, but it materially increased the force of the second, which was "Ungentlemanly."

"Who said that?" asked Paul, looking fiercely round.

"I, Sir," said a stout-built, middle-aged man, apparently a respectable tradesman, who had daughters in the room, and who probably thought they had been humiliated by breathing the same atmosphere with the pretty artist.

"Then you intend to insult this lady," said Paul, not very logically, "through me, who introduced her?"

"I have nothing to say to the *lady*," said the man, laying an impudent stress upon the noun,

“ but as for you, I consider that you are neither more nor less than an offensive puppy.”

There was a murmur of applause, which showed that some other people approved of this unflattering description of Paul. Angela strove to draw him away, looked appealingly at Mrs. Sellinger, and began to cry. That settled the matter, for the next moment Paul planted so decided a one-two in the face of the last speaker, that he went down with an eye that would be black in next to no time, and a nose that did not even ask that brief delay for its manifestation of the vigour of the blow.

The man sprang up, and in his turn assailed Paul, who was a fair bruiser, and the battle promised to be a good one. But women screamed, and men shouted, and there was a rush upon the combatants, and in ten minutes Miss Livingstone was going home crying in her cab; Paul was swearing on his way to the station-house, and Mrs. Sellinger’s favourite pupils were dancing the new dance from the Black Forest.

CHAPTER XI.

A SKILLED WORKMAN LOOKS OUT A TOOL.

ON the third morning after that on which Lilian Trevelyan and Bernard Carlyon had met for the first time, three persons were awaiting the arrival of the latter, in a small town a few miles from Aspen Court. The monks, who named the place Lynfield-Magna, had doubtless their own standards of admeasurement; and there are parchment records of the existence of a Lynfield-Parva, which have survived all vestiges of the latter, except that in a granary in its supposed neighbourhood, there is one wall of ecclesiastical solidity, a probable legacy from the days when churches were not vamped up by cheap contracts and sealed tenders. So Lynfield-Magna has now a solitary greatness, the components of which are a long dull street, which forks at one end into two shorter and duller ones, while, at the other end, an ugly square room, hoisted into the air on a number of piles (which the architect possibly considered to be columns), represents a town-hall, and acts as an umbrella to the market-women. The old church, at the junction of the three streets, has been so barbarously

treated by its successive wardens, that its mutilated features can hardly be recognised; but it is the only object of interest in the place, and as you pace up and down its pew-cumbered aisles, you can at least exchange the sense of stagnation which settles on you outside, for an active instinct of wrath towards those who have clogged up the arches with clumsy galleries, painted sprawling texts from the Proverbs over the walls, set up high boxes lined with green baize, and labelled with brass plates, for respectable miserable sinners, and planted narrow rickety forms, between the worst draughts, for cotton gowns and smock-frocks. And if you ever read the poems of one of the finest gentlemen, as well as one of the best priests, who ever lived, namely, old George Herbert, you will wonder what pew-owners (with their pew-keys in their pockets) would think of his very low hint to the church-goer:—

"Kneeling ne'er spoil'd silk stocking. Quit thy state.
All equal are within the Church's gate."

There are about a dozen good houses in the town, and it is in one of these, a stiff, red-brick building, with a highly-polished brass knocker on the door, that the group we have mentioned is assembled. The house belongs to an apothecary, whose practice is not popularly supposed to be large, but the man must be bold—bolder even than an Income-Tax Commissioner—who should

venture to point out to the stout and scowling Mr. Mardyke that his establishment appears larger than his gains seem to warrant. For the present, his drawing-room, and some other parts of his house, are occupied by strangers, but as Mr. Mardyke is a childless widower, this does not interfere with his domestic arrangements.

Lilian Trevelyan is painting at a small table near one of the windows, and the fair hair would descend in a cataract upon the paper, but for a golden net-work, which holds the curls in graceful imprisonment. She is not so completely absorbed in her work as to be unable to send an occasional glance up the long street, and her position gives her a view of the road a traveller from Aspen would probably take.

Two gentlemen are in the apartment. One of them, a largely made man, in the prime of life, is lounging in what was once supposed in London, and is perhaps still supposed in Lynfield, to be an easy-chair. He is reading one of the reviews of the day. His occupation seems a careless one. Is the face careless? The features are large, and exceedingly fine. You might call them sensuous, especially the mouth with its full lower lip; and the violet eye, bright as it is, might possibly turn with no unrecognising gaze upon certain good and fair things of this life; but look at the magnificent brow, round which the black, half-dishevelled

locks cluster in ample folds. The massive head is almost Olympian. The beauty of that face is not a mere question of taste, but must be acknowledged on the instant of confronting it. Not that it is of the beauty which is most desirable in this common-place world, or one for which a man, emulous of ordinary successes, would prudently barter his neater fascinations, his drawing-room effectiveness. Some women, and a good many of the other and more cowardly sex, would be afraid of that face. If the author of the review could peep from between his own lines, he would dislike that face, and not without reason. For the article is a controversial one, designed to serve the cause to which the reader is attached, and the bright violet eye is lightning into the holes in the logic, and the lip is sneering at the hackneyed phraseology. The reader is certainly sitting in the seat of the scoffer. He has been making some pencil notes, but not in the book, and possibly as memoranda for some private and unfavourable communication.

The other gentleman is seated at a side-table, with his face averted from his companions. A faint muttering occasionally escapes him, to which they are probably accustomed, for neither takes any notice of the sound. A book, apparently of devotion, is before him, but he is not reading it, and he arouses from long intervals of meditation

to repeat rapidly a few scarcely audible words. He is slight and delicate in figure, with hands and feet of feminine smallness. His features are marked, the nose is aquiline, but the mouth indicates irresolution, and there is timidity legibly written in the upper portion of the face. The hair is long, and thin, and grey, but its greyness, and a stoop, manifest even while he is sitting, seem the traces of suffering rather than of age. But the strangest characteristic of his face is its utter bloodlessness. Its whiteness is startling, and troubles the eye. It resembles neither the pallor of disease, nor the sudden blanching of terror, nor the sickly hue which attests the student's vigil, but a nearer approach to the ashiness of death than we might deem that life could make, and live. A man will hardly see that appearance twice in his time, and it is well for his dreams if he do not see it once.

"So far, so bad," said the reader, throwing his book upon the table.

"How ungrateful!" replied Lilian; "when the poor man has taken the trouble to write so many pages in the hope of pleasing you."

"*Sententiae ponderantur, non numerantur*, Miss Trevelyan," returned the other; "which means, in the present case, that the quality, and not the quantity, of a man's sentences are in question, and if they are bad, like those of our friend here,

it is an aggravation of his offence that they are many. Don't you agree to that?"

"I don't think that I do," said Lilian. "I have such a very great respect for anybody who can put words together in a way which makes them fit to be printed."

"That the more he puts together, the more your respect? Very well; but that is what we call in Latin a *petitio principii*, a logical mendicancy, a begging the question."

"Latin twice in two minutes," said the young lady, laughing; "unless the first was Greek. I will not be talked to in that manner. I have read, somewhere, that somebody who was very clever, mind, declared that what could not be said in English was not worth saying at all. Please to remember that, Mr. Heywood."

"Why, yes. Somebody spoke safely enough, considering what English is, and how little entitled it is to be regarded as a distinct language."

"On the contrary," said Lilian, "I will show you that it can be very distinct indeed, if you persist in debating everything with me. Why don't you sometimes agree to what people say?"

"Why don't people sometimes say what I can agree to?" answered Mr. Heywood. "Besides," he added, with a singular intonation of his rich, pleasing voice, "if I were too assenting, who knows but that I might be taken for a Jesuit,

aiming at some ultimate object, and in the meantime striving, by my silkiness, to ingratiate myself with my tools and victims? That would be very sad, you know."

Lilian looked at him earnestly for a moment or two, but made no reply.

"It is a wonder," he said, after a pause, "that your conquering hero is so long in coming. You wrote, that after twelve o'clock you should be happy to see him, and I am surprised that he makes you wait for your happiness.

"He will be here, I have no doubt," said Lilian, colouring, but speaking in a calm grave tone. "I wish that I had as little doubt as to—as to—" She hesitated, and bent over her work.

"It is my duty to remove any doubts you may entertain, Miss Trevelyan," said Mr. Heywood, dryly. "I rather hoped that I had already done so, but I see that I underrated the power of another influence, upon which we had none of us calculated three days ago."

This time Lilian's fair face became crimson. But when she raised it, and met the keen gaze of her companion, she answered courageously enough—

"I thought we understood—no, I mean that it was agreed between us, that this subject was to be spoken of in one way only. That my duty was to be pointed out, and that I was to hear

nothing but what related to *that*, and to my fulfilment of it. Is this the way in which you mean to treat me?"

"You can hardly forget to whom you speak, Lilian," replied Mr. Heywood, with displeasure.

"Had I forgotten, do you think I should remain to speak?" returned Lilian, with firmness.

That firmness was probably new to her. At any rate Heywood looked at her with that species of interest one might feel in watching the solution of a problem. He gazed for some moments, and then, as if he had made up his mind as to the character of some process which had taken place before him, he slightly nodded, and said, with a smile—

"*Quod erat demonstrandum.* Rely upon my not annoying you again."

She understood him, or thought she did, for she once more flushed over cheek and forehead, but she made no further answer.

"I think this Mr. Carlyon must remain with us during the day," said Mr. Heywood. "I should like him to dine with us. By the evening, I shall be able to see our course. Remember, please, that what I chiefly want to ascertain is, whether he has ambition."

"You visited his employer, I thought," said Lilian, "in order to understand his character?"

"I did, and for a better reason still, namely, to

see whether enough could not be done with Molesworth himself to make his subordinate's services unnecessary. I do not think that I did my work badly, or that I left a point untouched where I could touch without danger. But as to the Wilmslows, he was so guarded that he only revealed to me that there must be something to guard, or he would have been more open. And as to Mr. Carlyon, though my companion took a very good story with him, which passed with Molesworth, he spoke as slightly as one would expect a lawyer to do about so unimportant a person as one of his *employés*. In short, we did little, except convincing ourselves that there is something wrong; and the first use we make of Carlyon is, to discover what this something is."

"And the next?" asked Lilian.

"Depends upon Mr. Carlyon himself; and," he added, as if urging the thought as likely to please his companion, "it may be very greatly to his advantage, as advertisers say."

"It is doing what is right," said Lilian, but repeating the words as if they were a form.

"It is doing what is right," repeated Mr. Heywood, earnestly and authoritatively; "and it is also a merciful and happy providence that we are enabled to achieve this good work without recourse to any agency but that which is honourable. I do not mean, of course, that there can be real

dishonour in any act which promotes the welfare of the church, but she does not always call upon us to sacrifice even our worldlier feelings for her service, but more often invites us to baptize them into, and consecrate them to, that service."

And at that moment Lilian's blue eye's sparkled, and Heywood, observing her, felt that she had made out the approaching figure of Bernard. But he wisely abstained from reminding her to apply the lesson of his last words to the sentiment of joy the sight had caused her, for he knew enough of the Mysteries to be certain that her girl's heart was justifying its own delight without the aid of his theology. One of Heywood's manifold accomplishments was, the knowing when to hold his tongue.

Carlyon, having stabled his horse at one of the two very bad inns of Lynfield, hastened to present himself at Mr. Mardyke's house. He was welcomed by Lilian, who presented him to Mr. Heywood.

In an instant, the buoyant spirits, with which Bernard had ridden, somewhat hard, to the little town, were dashed and chilled. That magnificent-looking stranger, obviously on terms of intimacy with the family! When we have once committed the indiscretion of placing our happiness in the keeping of another, how suspicious we are of the

trustee we have chosen. The cloud of trouble which came over Carlyon's heart must in some degree have shadowed his face, for Heywood turned to Lilian with a smile, and after a moment said—

“We poor Catholics are jealous of our titles, you know, Mr. Carlyon—the Reverend Cyprian Heywood has the pleasure of making your acquaintance!”

And Catholic clergymen do not marry; and what a glow of pleasure came upon Bernard's forehead! and how cordially he shook the hand Mr. Heywood held out to him—the latter reading the whole *historiette* as plainly as it is set down here. The pale gentleman then came forward a few steps.

“My uncle, Mr. Eustace Trevelyan!” said Lilian.

The ashy-looking uncle took both Carlyon's hands in his own; and in earnest, but broken sentences, warmly thanked him for his intervention in behalf of Miss Trevelyan. He then looked doubtfully at Bernard, as if anxious to know whether he thought sufficient acknowledgment had been made, and seemed hesitating whether he ought not to recommence his thanks. But as Carlyon, after a brief reply, addressed himself to Lilian, the nervous man appeared relieved, and returned to his table by the wall. And so Bernard

made the acquaintance of the "strange persons" whom Lilian promised he should see.

Incalculable are the advantages a French author enjoys over an English one. Among them, and not the least, is the amiable patience with which a not proverbially patient people allows its novelists unrestricted time and space to tell their stories. A hundred pages of dialogue, more or less, are nothing to a French *raconteur*, and to a story-teller who does not wish to be egotistic, and likes to set his characters talking, instead of himself talking about them, nothing can be pleasanter than making dialogue. Oh! for the good days of Sir Charles Grandison, and the interminable conversations in that oak parlour. But those days are gone, and stories are expected to make some little progress now and then. But for this oppressive tax upon free speech, what a number of things Mr. Carlyon should have said this day; nor should Mr. Heywood's artfulness have been inarticulate, nor Miss Trevelyan have been more silent than becomes a young maiden. But we have much work before us.

The stars were looking into the Severn when Bernard returned to Aspen. It was a bright, clear, cold night, and they sparkled and twinkled with all their might. I think Bernard looked at the stars a good deal, but I doubt whether he saw them.

He had gone through the intended ordeal well,

—the better, perhaps, that he had not been for a moment on his guard, and had only thought of his happiness in finding himself passing hour after hour in the company of Lilian Trevelyan. The priest had exerted his marvellous powers of pleasing, and while apparently contributing only a handsome share to a varied and animated conversation, had in reality put the mind of Carlyon through its paces, and formed a plausible estimate of its powers. He found an intellect, of the order which is too ready (according to some profound persons) to be great, but singularly practical. He found scholarship, graceful, but superficial, and the better adapted, perhaps, to the uses of the world than a sounder learning. He found fluent speech, some wit, and much facility of self-adaptation to circumstances. And then he addressed himself to the moral nature of Carlyon—and was baffled. Not that Bernard affected concealment, or dreamed of the scrutiny he was undergoing. But there was a disturbing agency (like that of the undiscovered planet whose influence was felt in the calculations) which set that nature away from its ordinary tracks and channels, and, for the moment, enabled it to defy the analyser. It was Lilian Trevelyan who came between her spiritual friend and his aim. Bernard might be proud, might be revengeful, might be ambitious, or might be none of these; but all that the priest could with certainty

decide was, that Bernard loved, and on this he had decided very early in their interview. It would be necessary to apply some stronger tests, and it was on these, while Carlyon, on his homeward road, with a full and an untroubled heart, was weighing hopes, and fears, and chances in scales which he held all unsteadily, that Heywood was meditating. And the plotter had fallen asleep long before the lover had merged the blue of Lilian's eyes in the dull grey of the dream light.



CHAPTER XII.

LILIAN TREVELYAN'S INVALUABLE GUARDIAN.

THE following day Carlyon strolled out for a solitary walk (rather to the discontent of the young ladies at Aspen, who had intended to enlist him for some little expedition of their own), and for a reason which any young gentleman who has ever fancied himself in love will possibly appreciate, he walked in the direction of Lynfield, though he had not the least intention of visiting that interesting town. A couple of miles from Aspen Court he met Heywood, who was also walking, and apparently intent on a book.

“ Ah, Mr. Carlyon, I am very glad to have met you. I see,” he said, looking round, “ that my friend here has beguiled me into extending my walk most unreasonably, and it is fortunate that you have stopped me.”

“ Do they write such engrossing books ? ” said Bernard ; “ I never get hold of them.”

“ No, the art has gone out,” replied the clergyman ; “ but this book has been doing its work for three hundred years and more. You will think it

anything but a clerical handbook, I suppose. And he held the open volume to Carlyon.

“Rabelais. Ah! I understand your overlooking the milestones.”

“Is he not glorious? I was just reading Friar John’s encouragement of his friends when they were going to battle with Picrochole. He tells them that he fears nothing but the great ordnance; yet he knows of a charm, taught him by a sub-sexton, that will preserve a man from the violence of guns, and all manner of fire-weapons and engines, but, he adds, ‘it will do me no good, because I do not believe in it.’”

“The philosophy of the failure of a good many specifics in this world,” said Carlyon; “from beneficent legislation up to—what shall we say—galvanic rings.”

“It is true,” said the priest; “and yet let me give you a piece of advice, which you need not be afraid to take even from a designing Papist like me. It is early in life for *you* to be severe upon the world, and you will get through it better by an occasional bow to its idols—at present at least. For if a very young man laughs at them, the kindly judging world will say, not that it is because he has eyes, but because he could never get near enough to the pedestal to join in the rites. Don’t be incensed—you are five-and-twenty or so—I am forty, and I have lived in my time.”

Bernard here judged it proper to inquire after his host of the preceding day—and indeed his host's daughter.

“Oh! very well, and delighted with you. You must come over again when the Miss Wilmslows can spare you. By the way, I am doubly glad we have met this morning, for I had thought of asking you a question, one that affects Miss Trevelyan. Perhaps, though, it is asking you to do an unprofessional thing in giving some advice to your defeated antagonists.”

“Pray make me useful,” said Carlyon, mentally trampling all etiquette into the lowest contempt.

“Why,” said the priest, “it is not of much importance, but one likes to be right. It is this—I speak of course in confidence. Let me plunge at once *in medias res*. When the young lady we speak of was an heiress—before your friends deprived her of the title—she received, as you may suppose, many proposals.”

What possible right had Carlyon to begin to feel so exceedingly sick at heart! Was it not most natural that a young and beautiful girl should have such offers? So he admitted, and then remembered that she had not accepted any of them, and he felt a most unjustifiable comfort in reflecting that she was no longer rich. Who says

that love softens the heart ? He made a sort of assent, intimating to Heywood to go on, but the latter thought it was rather a curious sound.

“ Her circumstances having altered, of course any such negotiation terminates, *ipso facto*, unless renewed. Now of two gentlemen who might have been considered to be pretty equally eligible, any preference on the lady’s part set aside, one, a friend of my own, has entrusted me with such a renewal, couched in the most graceful terms, and really a creditable offer. He is a man of fortune, an educated person, and otherwise calculated, I think, to make Lilian happy. I have reason to know that she has a considerable regard for him, and I suppose this will be the marriage. Now, Mr. Carlyon—by the way, how white you look ! Do you know, I think that you London men over-exert yourselves when you come into the country, and the change of air upsets you.”

“ There is—there may be something in that,” said poor Bernard hastily ; “ I have been riding a good deal—but it is nothing—pray go on.”

“ Ah ! and you ride hard too. Miss Trevelyan remarked yesterday, when you came in, that you looked flushed, as if from a gallop.” And he continued to watch Carlyon, who was conscious of changing colour two or three times under the other’s gaze.

"I shall be more careful in future," said Bernard, with an effort. "But what is your inquiry?"

"Why this," said Heywood, "for I am in—I will not say a delicate, but a double position. This gentleman is, as I have said, my friend, and I would gladly promote a marriage upon which he has set his heart. On the other hand, I am still more bound, for reasons with which I need not trouble you now, to take care of the interests of Lilian Trevelyan. Of course we shall employ lawyers to do that which, in this happy country lawyers only can do; but, in the first place, there are two or three points for consideration. I have no doubt that, with your knowledge and practical habits, you will put me right in a minute."

Carlyon only trusted himself with another slight assent.

"This lover of Lilian's," said Heywood, possibly choosing his words, "though rich, is unfortunately placed in certain circumstances, which, though in no way affecting his honour, would be exceedingly disadvantageous to his interests were they known. And—I speak to you, again, in the utmost confidence—they are so apparently—shall I say suspicious, that if Lilian herself—"

"One word, Mr. Heywood," said Bernard, "and you will forgive the interruption when you understand its reason. I must not hear the circumstances you were about to mention."

"I have to beg *your* forgiveness, Sir," said the priest, with the instant and haughty humility of a man of the world. "I understand you. I had ventured to rely on your assurance a few minutes ago that you were willing to be useful. I *am* trenching, it appears, on professional etiquette—my ignorance is my only excuse." He raised his hand to his hat, as if about to terminate the interview, when Bernard replied quietly, for he had been for some time striving to master himself, and the little personality assisted him.

"You *do* understand me, Mr. Heywood. I repeat that I shall most gladly be of any service to Miss Trevelyan. But there is a reason why I ought not clandestinely to become possessed of information with which I might, as I gather from your statement, materially damage the interests of a suitor for Miss Trevelyan's hand."

Heywood's bold, keen glance was turned full upon the face of Carlyon, but it was met by a gaze as bold and searching as his own. For Bernard, after the first shock of Heywood's communication was over, had learned, either from an unguarded look, or from an over-acted passage—a word will suffice where the faculties are so painfully sharpened—that the priest knew his secret.

"You had better speak plainly, Mr. Carlyon,"

replied Heywood, who knew, in his turn, that both masks had fallen.

“I have done so,” said Carlyon. “And I do not know that I ought to say another word. To Mr. Heywood it is certainly needless that I should.”

“I am a plain man, Sir,” said the priest, “and I like straightforward dealing, and, therefore, if you will not speak out, I will. An attorney has sent his clerk to be a sort of man in possession at Aspen Court, and that attorney’s clerk has done Miss Trevelyan, a beautiful young lady, of one of the best families in England, the honour to regard her with favour, and, like a chivalrous rival, declines to hear anything against a *millionaire*, who intends to marry her.”

“How utterly unworthy I should be of the hopes I entertain,” said Bernard, with an unmoved voice and a calm smile, “could I feel ashamed, even for a second, by your high-minded taunts! Can you borrow nothing stronger than that from your friend Rabelais? He was a master of vituperation, but would hardly have found a sting in charging a gentleman with having raised his eyes something higher than his fortunes, before raising his fortunes to the height he designed.”

“A neat speech, and well spoken,” said Heywood, “and one which sounds like a scrap from

a sentimental comedy. Perhaps you write for the stage? At all events, accept my applause. I have not the slightest right to go further, and to ask Mr. Bernard Carlyon whether, as a practical man, he has any reason, the least, for anticipating the accomplishment of his ambition."

"That, Sir," said Bernard, preserving his temper, "is not the question of the moment. My object was merely to avoid the receiving an undue advantage from what, when you began to speak, I supposed to be a professional confidence. Probably I mistook a supposed case for a real one," he added, in a tone which he tried to render as careless as he could.

"You would like to lay that flattering unction to your soul," said the clergyman, now laughing without reserve, but not offensively. "Come, we have exchanged cut and thrust, suppose we keep the peace for a few minutes, and, if you like, you may imagine that I spoke rudely in order to test your power of self-command. We priests, you know, are artful enough for anything. But I must try back on the old scent, (is that the orthodox phrase?) and if we are to talk at all on the subject, I must ask you to consider your social position."

"Mr. Heywood," said Bernard, "we are speaking under curious circumstances. I interrupted you in a story which probably you introduced in

order to be interrupted, and a certain inference, which I have not contradicted, naturally resulted. But—”

“ My dear young friend,” said Heywood, “ you are clearly destined for the House of Commons, and will do well to reserve these phrases for the honourable and learned gentleman opposite, who may slightly misapprehend you, and so forth. You profess love for Miss Lilian Trevelyan, you are speaking to her best and most trusted friend, who invites you to speak out, and you answer in the platitudes of a debating society.”

“ I have great respect for Miss Trevelyan’s friend,” said Bernard, who was determined not to be driven, “ but I have no right to suppose that he is mine.”

“ That is the first sensible word I have heard from you,” said Heywood, good-naturedly; “ and it deserves to be met with frankness. Lilian Trevelyan is everything to me, and all my friendships and enmities (if enmities were proper) must connect themselves with her welfare. That is plain speaking. Now for yourself. I like you, and I do not think it impossible that, with opportunities, Miss Trevelyan might ultimately be brought to a similar admission—though you need not flush up to your eyes in that manner. And as I was rude just now, I ought to say, though as a man of sense you are already sure of it, that the

mere accident of your learning the law in an office, instead of yawning over it in chambers, is, with me, a circumstance in your favour, rather than against you. There is a man who will, one of these days, be a cabinet minister, who was, no very long time ago, holding your place in a solicitor's house in the city. But I do not intend that Miss Lilian Trevelyan shall be a lawyer's wife. *Meliora canamus*, Mr. Carlyon."

"I am indebted to you for having said so much," replied Bernard; "and it makes me quite sure that you mean to say more."

"Very little more, for you must speak now, or ever hereafter hold your peace on this subject. I have told you my position with regard to Miss Trevelyan, and as you have spent a day with us, I imagine you have convinced yourself that I have described it aright. So I speak with some authority. Have you any private fortune, or expectations of one?"

"I have no private fortune," said Carlyon. "It is not worth while talking of my expectations."

"I see what you mean," replied the priest. "Well, you must be near the expiration of your engagement to Mr. Molesworth. Is he going to take you into partnership?"

"There is no reason for my expecting such an offer," replied Bernard, "and were it made, I should decline it."

“Decline a share in a capital business, which produces some six or seven thousand a-year, I am told?”

“As you seem interested in the house, there is no objection to my telling you that your estimate is under the mark,” said Carlyon, “and that were Mr. Molesworth’s great energies supported by those of a working partner——”

“Such as you would make—instead of the gentleman who keeps bears and lynxes at Sydenham?”

“Just so,” said Bernard, smiling at this fresh proof of Heywood’s acquaintance with the subject; “but such as it is not my ambition to make.”

“Come, you have ambition, then. That is something. I was afraid that you had none; and were content to grovel on, filing, and demurring, and endorsing, and attesting, and declaring, and excepting, and vouching, and muddling, until you could sit down with a good balance at your banker’s, and complacently meditate on the noble and useful practice in which you had passed life.”

“Let me compliment you on having picked up the mantle of Rabelais, and on its excellent fit,” said Bernard.

“And I compliment you on your self-command, and I am glad to think that the loss of Miss Trevelyan will not break your heart,” returned the other. “And now we may as well understand one

another. In a spirit of kindness towards you, I have invited your explanations, and you refuse them, probably thinking that I am a mere interloper, and designing to address yourself directly to the young lady. But you do not know the family in question, or its habits. Come over to Lynfield, and make your proposals, and you will be at once referred to me for a decisive and final answer. You might have saved yourself trouble by an explanation on the spot, but that is your affair. Meantime, I was requested by Miss Trevlyan, should I accidentally meet you, to request the return of a chain of hers, which you forgot to mention yesterday. I believe that I see it—very thoughtful of you to wear it yourself, to ensure its safety, but let me release you from the charge."

Now this was a mere guess of Heywood's, for he could not see the carefully guarded chain, but the shot told.

"Mr. Heywood," said Bernard, after a pause, "you are a clergyman, but—"

"But a Papist, who, if honest, wishes to convert you, and, if dishonest, to use you—is it not written in the book of the chronicle of Protestant belief, and do you suppose I am irritated with you for holding to your amiable creed?"

"I might be hurt if I thought you in earnest," said Bernard, laughing, "but I rather imagine that you acquit *me* of intolerance. I was about

to say," he continued, with earnestness, "that during our interviews, both yesterday and to-day, your tone has been that of a well-tried man of the world, a man whose conversation one enjoys, but who certainly does not invite one's confidences."

"People have said that to me before, do you know," said Heywood, smiling, "and it is very sad that it should be so. I must go through a course of tracts, or something, to make me less worldly. Do you think that any of your evangelical parsons would take me as an apprentice for a little while, due security being given that I should not proselytise or smoke tobacco?"

"But, considering our very recent acquaintance," said Bernard, not heeding the interruption, "I suppose I may believe that such a conversation as we have had would hardly have taken place, if you had not some reason for carrying it further. I will imitate your plain speech, and say I am convinced that I can be of some service to you."

"You are a man of talent, Mr. Carlyon, but does your talent carry you no further than this? You are silent. Well, admitting that you can be of service—not to me—but to the family to which I am attached, are you willing to be so?"

"The question is hardly one which you, Mr. Heywood, need ask."

“The Trevelyan family are not ungrateful, and whatever you may do for them will be overpaid—I use the word deliberately, because I know that you will approve it. But still the service required is a large one.”

“I am not afraid to hear what it is,” said Carlyon.

“But I am half afraid to tell it you,” said the other, “which, however, I should not be, if I believed you half in earnest about Miss Trevelyan. Don’t look so haughtily indignant—a want of earnestness is one of the accomplishments which at your age a man studies, and is proud of, and does not utterly despise until his eyes open a little wider.”

“Still,” said Bernard, quietly, “I should like to hear what you have to say. You have, obviously, made close inquiries, no doubt in connexion with the object you seek, and probably these have informed you that I am scarcely a trifler, or, shall I say, to be trifled with.”

“Good,” said the priest; “anger, as worthy old Fuller observes, is one of the sinews of the soul, and he that wants it hath a maimed mind. I am glad Miss Trevelyan has so complete a champion. Now, listen. Your house has taken away Aspen Court from Lilian Trevelyan. Will you do your utmost to restore it to her?”

This speech certainly made Bernard start, and not without reason. It sounded like one of those audacious things which people say so coolly to us in dreams, and which we hear and answer with so much composure,—but then Carlyon had the disadvantage of being awake. He turned a bewildered eye upon his companion, as if to ask him to repeat his words. Heywood left him no time for discussion.

“Of course,” he said, “this is not a question to be answered in an instant. Give it full consideration. Only understand, that those who make it, perfectly comprehend your position, and the amount of means you possess for carrying out their object. Do not imagine that they suppose they are negotiating with a mere tool. Understand this; and, also, that he who leads Miss Trevelyan to Aspen as its heiress, leads her there as his wife.”

He spoke, at last, in the tone which carries conviction of the sincerity and good faith of the speaker, and he took Bernard’s hand,—

“I have set a prize before you, but it is set high. If your heart fails you, there is no shame in the matter, and I dare say you may make a very good solicitor, and lead a quiet and prosperous life, without Lilian Trevelyan. But if you choose the other course, and dare venture for Aspen, you will be well backed by those who can be

good friends to their friend. And now, not another word. Come over to Lynfield the day after to-morrow. And should you decline to aid us, I will spare you all troublesome explanation—if I see you return Miss Trevelyan's chain, I shall understand that this conversation is forgotten. And now, good day."

He shook Bernard's hand kindly, and walked away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OWL AND THE KITTENS.

CHARLES, EARL OF ROOKBURY, attained his majority in the year of Lord Nelson's funeral. Public attention was called to the fact by the young Earl himself, who, having entertained a select party upon the evening of the solemn ceremonial, and having got outrageously tipsy, as was not unusual with the territorial aristocracy in the year 1806, did sally forth with some companions, and, from the top of a hackney-coach, did laudably essay to dry the tears of the weeping metropolis, by assuring the crowds that he should take his seat in the Lords in a very few weeks, and though Nelson was gone, he, Charles of Rookbury, would watch over the country and the constitution. His friends hurraed this heroic declaration, but the mob did not see the fun, pulled the party from the coach, near the King's Mews, and handled them almost as roughly as the paragraph-mongers did for some days afterwards. Very witty were the latter upon the young lord's foolishness, and came out bitterly in italics. "A certain *spring* of nobility, just escaped from the

*twig at Eton, is supposed to have fancied himself an admiral t'other night, because he was *haly seas over.*"* Such was the character of the epigrams, by which the despotism of the aristocrats was tempered half a century ago, and Lord Rookbury came in for his share, as may be seen on proper application to Mr. Panizzi. But Lord Rookbury, though unluckily notorious, for some time, for this unseemly outbreak, had done, and could do, even better things than drinking claret and publishing the fact.

He came, after a long minority, to an ample and well-nursed estate, and having distinguished himself at college, was, as usual, expected to distinguish himself in public life. As usual, too, he disappointed expectations founded on that basis, as anybody who will take the trouble to look through Mr. Dod's Parliamentary Guide for the last ten years, will find is still the course (with a few confirmatory exceptions) of University stars,—a result, by the way, which ought to be set down to the credit of a system intended to prepare men to win the world's prizes, not those of the colleges. Lord Rookbury's family friends were chiefly Tories, which was perhaps a sufficient reason for the young lord—who always held that relations were a mistake—taking the other side. However, though he eschewed his native benches, he would not be naturalized on

those opposite, and early gave evidence of the self-will, or independence, as he preferred to call it, which marked him through life. Of course, the Court and Carlton blandishments were alike tried upon the wealthy young nobleman, but while he could be made to like neither the king's wit nor the queen's snuff, he was also proof to "the virtuous Dauphin," and the vocal Morris. It was soon found that Lord Rookbury could not be "had." But he attended in his place very regularly, and often made a brief smart speech, full of sarcasm, and designed to show both sides that they were incapable of going to the bottom of the question. The latter half of his address generally overthrew the argument of the former, and his practical commentary on both halves was going away without voting at all. Even as a young man, recently printed diaries have shown that Lord Rookbury sometimes set older lords thinking, when they had only intended dividing.

Time passed, so did Percevals, Liverpools, and Cannings; and Lord Rookbury's nature continued to isolate itself. He read much; he thought deeply; and he did nothing. The brief keen speeches still flashed out amid the commonplace of the house, and everybody listened; but rising men felt, that though they might fear Rookbury's sarcasms, they need not fear his competition; and that is a thought which mightily

consoles some of your rising men. And others who had risen, and could afford to be pleased when they liked, internally regretted that Rookbury had been too rich to be put into harness, or something might have been made of him, had he been duly bitted. It was even hinted that in reform times, the great Earl Chimborazo, high-throned all height above, had looked down from his inaccessible mountain, round which he haughtily permitted the world to revolve, and had indicated one of the lower peaks as a station for Rookbury. But he refused it, and even lived. That Earl passed, and was succeeded, and again Rookbury might have had office. He was perhaps a thought nearer to it now than ever in his life, for though the new premier's jovial laugh was unlike Rookbury's taunting gibe, the men had something akin in their common scorn of humbug. But it was too late, at least so Lord Rookbury thought, and it was decidedly so when Sir Robert and Lord John began alternately to mount guard, relieving one another at intervals. Rookbury was too old for drill. When, in 1846, Lord John came in on his five years' repairing lease, Lord Rookbury was sixty-one. There is a trifle to add yet, before he arrives at Aspen Court.

It has not been mentioned, Lord Rookbury seldom mentioned it himself, and never among his

friends, that he married. Nobody exactly knew why, but so many of Lord Rookbury's acts were incomprehensible. He was proud of his descent. Lady Rookbury's father was a tea-dealer. He liked beauty. The Countess was short, hungry-looking, and had high cheek-bones. And though Rookbury did not admire virtue, or set the slightest example thereof, he conceived it desirable in a peeress; and this made it the more strange that he should marry a widow whose Cheltenham interval had been talked about. There was some money, but not enough to be any object to his lordship—at least so people said, judging from his rental and the large sums he spent on his own amusements. However, they married, and lived decorously enough at Rookton Woods and in Acheron Square for four years, when the Countess of Rookbury, having presented the Earl with an heir, became dissatisfied with the Court physicians and called in a homœopathist. Being thus left a widower, Lord Rookbury announced, to prevent trouble to the mothers of families—for he was a very gentlemanly man—that little Viscount Dawton was not to have a step-mamma.

It would have been very delightful to me to have been able to continue the last sentence after the fashion of many charming writers of my acquaintance. Why can I not add, "and, retiring from the gay, but heartless metropolis, the

bereaved father resolved to devote himself to the education of his only child, in whose expanding intellect and amiable ways the affectionate Earl found his only consolation for the loss of his Matilda?" Because the Earl did not retire from the heartless metropolis, but, on the contrary, he re-furnished his town-house in exquisite taste, and during the season gave marvellous dinners, by which his cook, Monsieur Quenelle, gained a European reputation. But he was not fond of his child, nor even of his friends' children (which latter liking is sometimes found in men who take no great interest in their own), and he placed little Lord Dawton under such governess-ship and tutorship as he considered might exonerate himself from all further trouble in that trifling matter. And having himself been sent to Eton and Oxford, he sent Dawton to Harrow and Cambridge, at which latter seat of polite learning and true religion the heir of Rookton Woods was beating bargees when our story began.

So far I have stated nothing against Lord Rookbury. He was an exceedingly clever person, shrewd, audacious and sarcastic, with ample means, and plenty of will. Also, let us give him his further due. He was a finished gentleman in manners, incapable of coarseness, except under strong provocations, and remarkably pleasant in the society of women. At the time we speak of,

his tall figure, thin almost to fragility, but upright as a column, had not stiffened with age. His small, well-made head was perfectly bald. Wrinkles had reluctantly intruded to disturb the delicate Saxon features; and perhaps the habitual doubt—I do not like to write distrust,—which marked the old man's face, had aided to deepen the lines near the mouth. The cold blue eye was undimmed, and the teeth were white and perfect. Carefully, but not foppishly dressed, and bearing himself loftily and well, Lord Rookbury looked an excellent type of the English gentleman of rank, and when foreigners came to hear the debates in the Lords, they always marked him out as somebody, and were surprised to be told (by officials) that he was—"O, nobody particular—a peer." And by this time men with not a twentieth part of Rookbury's talent, had learned to speak of him as a mere crotcheteer, and even to pity him as possibly a little cracked.

I am afraid that I must not let him down so easily. He was a sad old reprobate,—and there you have it in half a line. A fine classical scholar, he wrote Latin verses as good as Lord Wellesley's, but all the purity was in the style. He liked Juvenal, which was odd, for that uncompromising gentleman lashes avarice, fraud, and luxury, and Lord Rookbury practised all three. Chiefly, you would wonder that a man who looked so well, and

spoke so boldly, was a downright cheat. And yet he was one. I do not think he exactly loved money for its own sake, and he would certainly spend it unhesitatingly in the gratification either of a pleasure or a vengeance, but he liked to take advantage of everybody. It was curiously developed, this passion for "getting the pull," as he called it; and he would make private ~~sacrifices~~ that the world might see him a winner. During part of his life he took to the turf; and more than one person now lives virtuously on the pension Lord Rookbury bestowed as a reward for taking the public shame of a daring turf-swindle, contrived by himself. You cannot cheat much at whist in England, but at *écarté*, in his own house, Lord Rookbury managed to win so wonderfully from a French gentleman, who knew himself to be of the first force, that the latter insisted on moving the table. There were looking-glasses in the room, by the way, and somehow Lord Rookbury not only won no more, but thought it well to return his past winnings.

Rookton Woods, his seat, was in the same county with Aspen Court, but nearly at the other end of it. We need not describe the place, because we are not going thither at present, but it shall be shown in its season. Parliament was up for the Easter holidays, and Lord Rookbury had gone home. There had been some frosts, to the

great wrath of the hunting-men, but the open day had come at last, and the Z. P. H. having met at Smudgington Bottom, and found, the fields around that moist retreat were soon studded with riderless horses, and horseless ex-riders. Lord Rookbury, who rode well to hounds, had been punctual at cover-side, and had shamed younger men by his management and boldness up to the first check. But while the old dog-fox was being extracted from the willow-copse near Blashtree End, which is about four miles, as the crow flies, from Aspen Court, a thought suddenly struck the Earl of Rookbury, and he was seen no more in that day's hunt. Soon afterwards the fox gallantly broke away at the other end of the wood, and after going to the right to Ankelow Butts, and over Bobchurch Hill, and so by Jobbins's farm and the Leasowes, took the left across the Hazleby road and the railway, where there was another check. But the hounds picked him up, and he went steadily over the downs to Grigs's Gorse, and thence by Low Wbacks to Bibbington, and was finally run into within a hundred yards from the Three Blind Ducks, Sluice Common, after a fine run of an hour and ten minutes, making the ninety-seventh brace the Z. P. H. had killed that last month ; and so hurrah for the manly pig-skin !

Lord Rookbury, who knew every inch of the country, having cleared himself from the hunt, set

his horse's head straight for Aspen Court, and according to his custom, when he was bent on an object, lost very little time in getting there. He gave a glance at his perfect tops, and was gratified to find that he was scarcely splashed, and for the rest he knew that his costume was faultless. Even between sixty and seventy it is as well to be tidy when one calls upon ladies, and Lord Rookbury was looking exceedingly well. He rode up to the door, which stood wide open, and began to hammer with his whip-handle. After some battering, the red-armed Martha appeared, and immediately began to curtsey to horse and rider, with her usual industry.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Wilmslow was at home.

"Out for a drive, I suppose?" said the Earl.

"Naw, Sir," said Martha, eager not to be misunderstood.

"Mr. Wilmslow out with the hounds, eh? I didn't see him."

"Naw, Sir, naw," said Martha.

"But he's not here, you say, girl?"

"Naw, Sir, I dint say so. But he don't want to see you, and he knows what you've come for."

"Does he?" said the Earl. "Then he knows a little more than I do myself."

"You be after no good," continued the faithful Martha, "and sooner you be off, better we be pleased."

It is impossible to say precisely what passed through the Earl's mind at this notification of his supposed intentions, but he made a most remarkable face at the rosy Martha, and then taking out his card-case he endeavoured to hand a card to that uncompromising person. But she put her great hands behind her.

"I shan't take none of your papers, naw. It's just as master thought, and you may keep it to yourself."

"Don't be such a fool, girl," said Lord Rookbury, ceasing to be amused, and suddenly looking very black indeed. "Take that card to Mr. Wilmslow, who is under some mistake about me, and then let me hear his answer. Do you hear?" he said, hastily dismounting, and entering the hall.

Noblesse oblige, in more senses than one, especially in this country. And at any rate it was not such a person as poor Martha, who could be expected to resist that dark scowl and thunderous command. But she resolved to compromise between her fears and her duty, and so taking the card with some tremor, she hastily made off with it into the lower regions of the house, and far enough away from the smoking-room, whence, indeed, Wilmslow had espied Lord Rookbury, and having been seized with one of his old terrors of legal invasion, had issued the sternest orders that he was not to be visible.

Throwing his rein over a hook at the door, the Earl walked about the hall for some time, and might have been walking there up to this present writing, for any step Martha would have taken to abridge his exercise. He pictured to himself Martha returning to her master with the card—the horror of that master at finding that he had sent an offensive message to one of the leading aristocrats of his county, who had honoured him with a visit of congratulation on recovering his estate; and he went on to imagine Wilmslow hastily dressing himself, and preparing a speech of apologies; and his lordship even proceeded to arrange a pleasant little joking reply, which should set the penitent at his ease. All this was very well in theory, but practically beside the mark, inasmuch as the Rookton Woods card, with a large black smear on front and back, from the thumb and finger of the good Martha, was safely stuck between the spikes of a save-all on the kitchen mantel-piece, the damsels intending that it should there remain until her mistress returned; and inasmuch as Mr. Wilmslow, having bitten his cigar through, in his irritation, was pacing the passages in a high state of wrath and uncertainty, and wondering why the fellow below did not go, and whether he had not better secrete himself in one of the distant rooms, until his wife or Carlyon (both of whom he heartily cursed for

being away) should return to confront the supposed enemy.

Lord Rookbury waited a very long time, long enough, he said to himself, for Wilmslow to have put himself into full court costume, and studied a perfect oration. And then he began to think that he was really being insulted, and dark thoughts entered into his head. He was on the point of leaving the house in a rage, when some light voices, and some merry laughter, came pleasantly on his ear. His face became quite *rayonnant*.

"Now, Mr. Acton Calveley, just to see whether your club stories are more accurate than your Oriental researches. You may perhaps know a pretty girl from a plain one, though you do not know Mesopotamia from Cappadocia."

With which observation he crossed the hall, which he knew well, and listening for a moment, found that the voices were in the garden.

The fine day, which had opened the hunting, had been as welcome to the young ladies at Aspen as to the mighty hunters of the Z. P. H. It was a good day for bringing out poor little Amy, and in causing that pretty little field-marshall to review all the household troops of pets which her sisters had enlisted during her illness. And when Lord Rookbury entered the garden, the old nobleman thought that a very pretty

group was before him; and as he had a keen eye for beauty, it may be presumed that he was right. Mention hath been made of an old tree, in the hole of which lived a lean cat, herself inaccessible to the civilizing advances of the girls, but who did not object to her kittens being patronised and instructed (just as some trustless and blaspheming she-Pariah, scowling from behind her short black pipe at her hovel-door, will snarl and scoff at the ladies from the visiting-committee, with their tracts and soup, but will yet send her brats to the infant-school), and who upon the present occasion was at home. A stool had been brought for Amy, who was carefully shawled, and deposited before the tree, and the tame fawn was placed in her arms, that they might keep one another warm, as Kate thoughtfully observed. The owl had been brought out, not much to his satisfaction, and was perched on a garden-chair, blinking mightily in the sunshine. The rabbits were on the grass, munching, and shaking their ears, and occasionally performing violent and convulsive jumps, throwing themselves into the air, without any obvious cause for such feats. Emma was holding one of the ring-doves on her finger, and laying one or two of her glossey brown curls across the bird as she caressed it. And Kate, having climbed upon a large garden-basket, which she had reversed for the purpose, was withdraw-

ing the old cat's kittens one by one for exhibition, a measure wistfully regarded by that matron, though on the whole she appeared to have a general confidence in the administration. Three of the kittens were already on the grass before Emma. The three girls were looking happy and laughing merrily as Lord Rookbury advanced.

He raised his hat, and smiled with great urbanity upon the group, as he gazed from one to the other. By a curious coincidence, the owl on the chair just then opened his eyes very wide, and gazed with considerable interest upon the three plump kittens on the grass.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. CHEQUERBENT AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE.

THE chivalrous and captive Paul raged vehemently as he was conducted to the police-station, and lost no opportunity of conveying to the police, and to such other audience as accumulated around the procession, his unhesitating opinion that of all the miscreants permitted to encumber the earth, a full-blown tradesman was at once the most offensive and the most despicable. His guardians rather evaded than exhausted the question by good-natured advice not to make a fool of himself, and the party soon reached the station, where the public was abruptly dismissed, the charge taken down, and Mr. Chequerbent locked up.

A cold seat in a gloomy cell, however, does wonders with those to whom it is a novelty, and Paul's passion began to subside with the fumes of the stimulants he had taken. He reflected, with some dismay, that he ought to have left town that evening, and that probably Carlyon would write to the office to inquire after him; that even if he escaped easily from the presence of the

magistrate, the affair might be reported in the papers, and Mr. Molesworth always read the police cases; and in short, that there was a very good chance of his getting into a very disagreeable scrape. And, being a good-natured fellow, he then found time to feel annoyed that he had made a scene which might injure Mrs. Sellinger with her connexions, to say nothing of the vexation to poor little Miss Livingstone. Altogether he grew very hot and fidgety, and paced the scanty dungeon with so much irritation that one of the policemen looked in at the grating, and asked him whether he thought he was the white bear at the Zulogic gardens.

A gentleman with money in his pocket, and a little tact, has not much to apprehend from the severity of the police force. So, as soon as Paul had calmed himself, and resolved upon a plan of action, his request to be let out, that he might say a few words, was very favourably listened to. There happened to be no other criminal in the station (except a brawny and drunken costermonger who was awaiting, in gentle slumber, a mild magisterial remonstrance for a little excess in enforcing domestic discipline—his error was stunning his wife with a poker and then stamping on her), so the inspector felt the less restraint in offering Paul a seat by the fire, and the conversation became friendly enough. During

the discussion which preceded Mr. Chequerbent's removal from the dancing-academy, Mrs. Sellinger, thoughtful amid her annoyance, had fetched him his *paletot*. Luckily his cigar-case was in his pocket, and his explanation that he was ordered to smoke a good deal on account of neuralgian bronchitis in the vascular ventricle, was humanely considered by the official, who having himself an hereditary tendency to the same complaint, did not refuse to share the remedy. And, in short, for a night in a police-station, Paul got through the hours pleasantly enough, and heard some profitable discourse, from which he may have learned, among other things, how little chance an accused person has of escaping from justice, when her inferior ministers have sufficient confidence in one another's honour and veracity to support one another by any confirmation the rules of evidence demand.

In the morning Paul had a tolerable breakfast brought him, and he had scarcely finished it when a lady arrived to see him. It is needless to say that this was poor Angela, who had already been to Mrs. Sellinger's, and who brought a selection, from Paul's carpet-bag, of everything he would want for a morning toilet. Angy was agreeably astonished to see him come out to her with his usual laugh. She had half expected to hear his fetters come clanking along, like the husband's in *Fidelio*. And she had scarcely a word of scolding

for him, but was eager to go anywhere, and see anybody, and do anything in the world, after the manner of our beloved ones when we really want their assistance. She proposed to visit Paul's antagonist, and to try and soften him; but this Paul would not hear of. He admitted that he had behaved rather badly, and he meant to offer the fellow an apology himself (though his insolence showed that he was a mere hound, who deserved all he had got), but Angela should not go near him. What did Mrs. Sellinger say? Angela had looked into her room,—she was of course in bed, for the ball had gone on until nearly six—but she sent her love to Mr. Chequerbent, and though she had tried in vain to mollify the man he had beaten, whose name was Shaddles, and who was a sort of miscellaneous grocer in the neighbourhood, she had written a note to the reporter who usually attended the police-court (whose daughter she had once taught), and had begged him to suppress the story for the papers. This piece of kind thoughtfulness, when she had good right to sulk, proved, Paul declared, that the handsome dancing mistress was a most amicable party and an out-and-outer.

Paul then began to consider whether he had better defend himself by counsel, and he thought of two or three barristers, just called, who had eaten many oysters and applauded many Adelphi performances with him, and any one of whom

would have cheerfully come up to Clerkenwell, and harangued the magistrate in his favour, citing every precedent of a combat from Moses and the Egyptian down to the last Members of Parliament who fought for a cab. But the friendly inspector dissuaded him from this course, as inimical to his own interests, summing up his reasons in a terse whisper—

“The beaks hate tongue. Eh?”

Yielding to this suggestion and strictly inhibiting Miss Livingstone from any attempt upon the plebeian Shaddles, Paul dismissed her with his benediction, and arranging that they should meet in court. So the little actress went away somewhat comforted at Paul’s cheerfulness, but still awful terror at the thoughts of the vengeance which she felt assured would be launched upon him from the magisterial bench. She determined to be near him during what she chose to think his “trial,” and to console him in the dark hour of doom, and although I do not suppose her line of reading had ever made her acquainted with that sweet saint who sat by Russell’s side, she instinctively resolved on a similar course of devotion. She wandered about the streets (for she was much too restless to go home and study her part in the new drama of the “Fiend Idiot of the Gory Gorge” as she ought to have done), and altogether looked too fresh, and too neat, and too

pretty to be walking about among the soddened, slovenly, slipshod natives of Clerkenwell.

The magistrate usually came down at half-past ten, and the poor little girl grew tired of walking about, looking listlessly into shop windows, and being recognised by various patrons of the stage, who, in their shirt-sleeves, were going for their morning dram. She kept near the street in which the police-court stood, and at length went into a small newspaper shop, bought a miscellany in which some wretched stories were balanced by a mass of good sense and practical information, and all for a penny, and asked leave to sit down. Her arrival was providential, for the woman of the shop was dying for an audience to hear how shamefully her Johnny, a fine fear-nothing fellow, ma'am, and only eleven, had been caned by a gentleman, as he called himself, though anybody might have seen he was nothing of the kind, for just knocking his tip-cat into the eye of a lady who happened to be going by promiscuous as the poor child was playing. And when Johnny's grievances had been told out, and a few other revelations of interest, including the probability of his speedily having a new little brother or sister, and a treatise on various infantine diseases, had been offered, after the manner of matrons of that class with their chance customers, *Angela* was allowed to take up a newspaper.

Members of Parliament are not the only people who take hints from the press. Angela's eye happened to fall upon a paragraph headed, "Disgraceful Bigotry in a Parson." She read on, and found that a clergyman was being vehemently castigated for having expressed a wish that a certain theatre in his London parish were closed. The indignant journalist made mince-meat of the haughty and bigoted buttress of a bloated establishment. A parson presume to attack the stage, whose business "'twas to hold a mirror up to nature!" Probably this insolent priest did not know that four words of an author who had written plays had been quoted by St. Paul, a humble tent-maker, whom proud ecclesiastics in purple and fine linen thought beneath their notice. Perhaps he had never heard of Shakspeare, who was not for an age but for all time, and who had written glowing lessons of virtue and morality, which it would be well if all sermons contained. Perhaps he thought that assailing an establishment where sixty-seven people got their bread was the way to spread peace on earth and goodwill amongst men. The fierce and haughty priest, who would doubtless be a Laud or an Inquisitor if he had the power, was recommended to keep to his books, and not to wing his venomous shafts against the drama, which contained passages of a purity which churchmen might well imitate, and whose eloquence

and pathos made their way through the iciest bosom, and turned to melting charity the coldest heart.

This intense and logical appeal, addressed to a poor, white, threadbare, over-worked curate, who had regretted that a theatre, which nightly collected all the scoundrelism of the district to see scoundrelism glorified upon the stage, and which its managers avowed was weekly supported "two nights a-week by wages, four nights by thieves," could not be better regulated, produced an effect of which the exasperate writer little dreamed. It was not the closeness of its reasoning, or the beautiful fervour of its language, but the eulogy on the powers of the drama that did the work. Angela laid down the paper, and with a raised colour and a flushing cheek walked out of the little shop, ringing, with a violent clatter, the spring-bell on the half door, and cutting the shop matron short in an elaborate discussion, with another customer, on the tyranny of compulsory vaccination.

Miss Livingstone, with an energetic step, hastened to the nearest stationer's, where she bought a very fine card embossed with roses and wreaths, and upon which, with a very scratchy steel pen, she inscribed her name, not over legibly, for her education had been a little neglected. And then she made off for the police-court, where she

found one of the officers who had seen her at the station, and who, learning her errand, conducted her to the magistrate's private door, and apprised her that "the Beak had shown."

The Beak, known in private circles as Mr. Prior, had arrived—if it is necessary to translate—and while his chief clerk was disposing of some routine business in court, was amusing himself with a newspaper containing an attack upon one of his decisions. The article was in quite another vein from that of the energetic assailant of the clergy, and after giving a report of the case in question, proceeded to argue, closely and wittily, that Mr. Prior had done an injustice. Nor could this be disputed, if the premises had only been correct. But—and the accomplished journalist, who in his West-end chambers penned the smart and biting diatribe, never condescended to speculate on a chain of such vulgar chances—the report was incorrect in every important particular. And for this the reasons were so shockingly low that I am ashamed to write them. The regular reporter at the police-court could not attend at the hearing, because his wife was engaged in presenting to him, with some difficulty, a ninth co-heiress to the manifold writer and the flimsy. He sent a substitute, who would have been efficient, but, not expecting to be employed, had taken so much whiskey and water in the course of a religious

argument with a brother-reporter, a Catholic, for whose conversion he was anxious, that, though he managed with habitual instinct to scratch several facts of the case together, they were arranged in such a form as to present anything but the story which came out before Mr. Prior. Then another trifle interfered with the accuracy of the report—the reporter did not hear the case at all; he was too late for it; but, as it was one of interest, he gleaned his points as well as he could from spectators, policemen, and other unrecognised authorities. The wonder was, not that a duty done under such disadvantages was done so ill, but that it was done so well; but this was small consolation to Mr. Prior, who was spiked on a glittering epigram for bad law and bad English, of both of which he was quite innocent.

Paul Chequerbent's liberality at the station-house had ensured for his pretty little friend an attention which possibly she might not otherwise have gained. For on her knocking at the magistrate's private door, and presenting her splendid card, the policeman, who knew her, made such a sign to the one who opened the door, that he received the imposing document without a grin, ushered her into a waiting-room, and went through a double-door, into the presence. There was a pause, during which little Angela, with a fluttering but a resolute heart, unfastened

her bonnet-strings and repeated some words to herself.

“Ah! well—let her come in,” she heard a deep, kindly-sounding voice say, as the doors opened. The policeman beckoned her.

I think she was a little taken aback as she entered the magistrate’s room with a hasty but heroine’s step. She rather expected to be confronted with somebody more theatrically terrible. She supposed she should find a stern potentate in robes, and with a fierce frown; while his chin, high in air, in the fashion of stage-haughtiness, should be over his left shoulder, his hand should have rested significantly upon the open volume of the law. Her intended rush was somewhat spoiled when she found herself before a portly gentleman, certainly, with grave but handsome features, which lighted with a pleasant, encouraging smile as she entered, and who even bowed slightly and laid down his newspaper to hear what she had to say. She hesitated.

“You wished to speak to me,” said the magistrate, taking up her card and trying to read it, “Miss—a—Lumpingstart—Leamington—I beg your pardon?”

“Livingstone, Sir,” faltered out poor Angela, who was beginning to think that her proposed plan of attack might not be altogether so eligible as she had fancied it.

“ So it is,” said Mr. Prior, “ but you young ladies write such Italian hands that they are troublesome to an English eye. Well, do you wish to speak to me on business?”

“ To speak to him on business,” Angela thought, was hardly cue enough for the speech she meditated, so she timidly explained that a gentleman of the name of Chequerbent was to be brought up that morning before his lordship for an assault.

“ Don’t say lordship,” said Mr. Prior, “ because that is premature. And whom has your friend been assaulting? You?”

“ No, Sir,” said Angela, startled into new excitement by this sudden and injurious supposition, “ he would protect me with his life. But in a moment of ungovernable rage, and stung into unmeasured madness by a taunt hurled at me by a wretch, he raised his hand against the base minion of tyranny—at least—his name is Shad-dles,” said Angela, getting bewildered and tra-velling out of the theatrical record.

The magistrate looked amused for a moment, and then said,

“ Is the affair a theatrical squabble, Miss Living-stone? Because if so, I hope it will be made up without my interference. You know that words which would be tremendous between private people go for nothing among professionals—the most

frightful vow of eternal hatred and hideous vengeance only means a little annoyance at not being repaid half-a-crown, or asked to supper. Surely you can make peace among you without me."

"It is not so, Sir," said Angela, once more, resolving to try her powers, and gaining confidence at the grave fatherly voice of the magistrate. Measuring her distance, like a practised artist, she suddenly dropped her bonnet, dishevelled her hair in a second, and dashing to his knee, knelt before him.

"Mercy, Sir, O mercy," she exclaimed in those wild and piteous tones which nightly drew tears down the grubby cheeks of her Hoxton audiences, in the speech from *The Hangman's Darling; or, The Bride of the Gallows*, with which she now favoured the worthy magistrate. "Mercy for his own young blood, mercy for his father's grey hairs. Misled by infatuation, he has plunged into the abyss of crime; but while the white-robed angel of Pity weeping waves her gentle wings over the storm-lashed deep of Passion, the boisterous surge may be baffled of its victim, and the wanderer's bark find happy harbour. Mercy, Sir, for you too are human—nay, think not that I mean t' insult you—but in that quivering lip I see the workings of compassion, and in that glistening eye I behold the dew of sympathy, a thousand

times more precious than the diamonds sparkling upon the monarch's brow."

Inspired by her own energy, she almost listened for the three rounds of thunderous applause which habitually greeted her clever and spasmodic delivery of the above beautiful passage. Instead of that demonstration, however, as she hid her face between her pretty hands, really crying, but sobbing with her shoulders in good melodramatic style into the bargain, the magistrate took her hand and raised her to her feet.

"Your elocution does you great credit," he said, "and the authors who write for you are fortunate fellows. And now tell me what you came about. See what is going on, Williamson," he added to the attendant policeman, who had stood considerably astonished and scandalised at the scene. "Now," he said, as the officer withdrew,—"what is it? You know I have but little time to spare."

Angela's tears now flowed very fast indeed; but having relieved her mind by the heroic effort, on the effect of which she found she had miscalculated, she told her little story in plainer English, taking the whole fault upon herself for coming to Mrs. Sellinger's in her Apollo dress, and begging the magistrate not to inflict a dreadful punishment on Paul.

"I can decide the case only as it comes before

me in evidence, you know," said Mr. Prior, " and in strictness I ought not to listen to you at all, for we have no asides here. However, I don't know that you need be very much terrified for your friend. And now I am going into court, and I leave you to put on your bonnet at your leisure. Good bye."

In the meantime Paul had been brought into the court, and, at a suggestion from his friend, the attendant policeman, had taken a seat at the table below the dock, where he was not exposed to much observation. He was soon informed that Mr Shaddles had come, and, rising, he beheld that gentleman looking very vindictive, and with nearly half of his face eclipsed in a huge green shade, which acted like a blinker, and made him walk awkwardly, as if trying to get round its corner. He was attended by his two daughters, who looked as if they came by command, and seemed fidgety and uncomfortable, and by no means grateful to him for thrusting them into rather a prominent seat, and talking to them loudly.

Paul immediately went up to Mr. Shaddles, and said, in a manly way enough,—

" Mr. Shaddles, I was both irritated and tipsy last night, and I find that I conducted myself very absurdly, and, as regards yourself, very unjustifiably. I am ashamed of myself for what I did,

and I should be more ashamed of myself if I were afraid to say so. I am willing to apologise to you, in the presence of such of your friends as were at the ball, and to pay five pounds, in your name, into the poor-box, or to any charity you like. I don't know that I can say much more."

"O, pa!" imprudently exclaimed one of the girls, quite colouring up with pleasure, "I'm sure he couldn't speak more gentlemanly; could he, Nelly?"

"No," was upon Nelly's tongue, but she had looked into her parent's face, and the half-formed word expired, as the classics say. Mr. Shaddles's scowl, or rather the instalment of it, visible outside the shade, was rather vicious. Having apprised his child that if she did not hold her d—d tongue he would knock her head against the wall, the amiable Shaddles turned to Mr. Chequerbent.

"O!" he grunted, with his head on one side, and his mouth held half open, to let the taunt come slowly out, "O!"

Now, as was said about Gibbon's history, nobody can refute a sneer, and it is equally difficult to offer a repartee to a zoological noise; so Paul, though marvellously inclined to echo it, held his tongue.

"No," said Mr. Shaddles, with a savage oath, "not if you was to offer fifty pound: what, I've brought you on your knees, my swell, have I?"

and face seamed with crimson plasters, pleaded that drink had maddened him, and hoped that the blows he had received before he could be secured, might atone for his having mutilated three or four officers. Children were placed behind a barrier, over which nothing but their shock hair and bright eyes could be seen, to be judged for pilfering, while the Jew fence, or the marine-store keeping Christian, lurked near the door, to hear whether his pupils were to rejoin him at once, or after some whipping and imprisonment. A lithe-limbed pick-pocket took his thirtieth sentence, with a pleasant bow to his judge ; an Irish beggar-woman sobbed and howled frightfully during the hearing, and then flung a stone at the chief clerk's bald head ; a maniac preacher announced his divine mission, with hideous cries about eternal fire and the undying worm ; and a consumptive gay woman, in yellow satin and a lace bonnet, was bound over not to assault a brown and corpulent hag, who lent her the trappings for her dreadful trade, and exacted, in return, nearly the last sixpence it produced. Such were some of the "cases" of the day. Take a chair in a police-court for one morning, and you will, perhaps, go away with a resolve to do quietly, and to the best of your power, the work which lies nearest your hand, but not to shout very much, for the future, when Mr. Sadducee, in the Commons, boasts about this enlightened age,

and Earl Pharisee, in the Lords, brags about this Christian nation.

Mr. Shaddles's case came on at last, and the worthy man, being placed in the witness box, and having knocked up his green shade in his extreme eagerness to bring the inspired volume to his lips, gave his evidence against Paul with great bitterness, and held forward his discoloured eye for the examination of the magistrate. He looked rather disappointed that the latter did not recoil with horror at the sight, but Mr. Prior was in the habit of seeing so many dozen black eyes a-week—inasmuch as a mechanic's wife seldom appeared in court without one at least—that he merely glanced at it with a quiet “Humph—ah.” Mr. Shaddles was then about to call his daughters as witnesses, when Paul begged that his admission of having struck the blow which produced the effect exhibited might save these young ladies the trouble of being sworn.

The policeman who had been cautioned by Mr. Shaddles then got into the box.

“ From information which I had received your worship I watched Mrs. Sellinger's ouse in Spelton Street where a dance was being carried on. At twenty minutes to twelve I eard a gent in the all say that there would be a row in two-twoes to which the other replied and no mistake. The

“Why, no,” said Paul, “not exactly that; but I think that when a gentleman has acted wrongly, he ought to apologise; and, what is more, I think that a right-minded man will accept his apology.”

“O, you’re a gentleman, and I’m a man, am I?” retorted Mr. Shaddles, furiously. “Very well, my gentleman, we’ll see what the man can do. I know all about it: devilish little apology you’d have made, if you hadn’t been in a funk, and now you think, with your swaggering airs, to carry it all off.” And he added an illustration, borrowed from natural history, to the effect that Paul’s selection of a female pig, and retention of her by her ear, was not fortunate. “Into that dock you walk, my cove,” concluded Mr. Shaddles.

“It’s your place to give orders in the court, I suppose,” said, sharply, the policeman, who had witnessed the interview; “perhaps you’d mind your own business, and not make that row.”

“O, what?” said the enraged Mr. Shaddles, vindictively; “that’s the game, is it? Palm oil, hay? Now, *you’d* best mind what sort of evidence you give presently, Master Peeler, or I shall know what it means. Look out, that’s all.”

“Don’t be afraid, Shaddles,” replied the officer haughtily. “You’d better take your seat, Sir,” he said to Paul. “Here comes his worship;—silence!”

“Then you refuse my apology and my offer, Mr. Shaddles,” said Paul in a lower voice.

Mr. Shaddles made no reply; but turning, so that the magistrate could not see him, he performed a gesture of defiant derision, seldom considered strictly graceful, and least so when executed with a stubby thumb on a swollen nose, and over a mouth opened to intimate a jeering laugh, suppressed by prudential considerations. So Paul once more took his place, with a bow to the young ladies, and the policeman went round to the comrade who had assisted him in taking Mr. Chequer-bent.

The Beak seated himself, and for some time there passed before him a portion of the grim phantasmagoria of depravity, want, and brutality, which every morning surges up to the judgment-seat from the turbid sea of London existence. The wife, foully battered and bruised by her husband, came, as usual, and hardly raised her swollen eyes to deny his counter-charge of drunkenness and aggravation. The mother was there to beg the law to protect her from the child that robbed and kicked her, and the sullen and vicious cub replied with a lie of starvation and ill-usage. The baby was laid, all bones and bruises, before the minister of justice, to testify that a beast's dam is kinder than some baptized and married mothers. Vile women, hoarse and pert, told their shameless quarrels, and bared their flesh to show the wounds of nails and teeth. A brawny ruffian, his head

and face seamed with crimson plasters, pleaded that drink had maddened him, and hoped that the blows he had received before he could be secured, might atone for his having mutilated three or four officers. Children were placed behind a barrier, over which nothing but their shock hair and bright eyes could be seen, to be judged for pilfering, while the Jew fence, or the marine-store keeping Christian, lurked near the door, to hear whether his pupils were to rejoin him at once, or after some whipping and imprisonment. A lithe-limbed pick-pocket took his thirtieth sentence, with a pleasant bow to his judge; an Irish beggar-woman sobbed and howled frightfully during the hearing, and then flung a stone at the chief clerk's bald head; a maniac preacher announced his divine mission, with hideous cries about eternal fire and the undying worm; and a consumptive gay woman, in yellow satin and a lace bonnet, was bound over not to assault a brown and corpulent hag, who lent her the trappings for her dreadful trade, and exacted, in return, nearly the last sixpence it produced. Such were some of the "cases" of the day. Take a chair in a police-court for one morning, and you will, perhaps, go away with a resolve to do quietly, and to the best of your power, the work which lies nearest your hand, but not to shout very much, for the future, when Mr. Sadducee, in the Commons, boasts about this enlightened age,

and Earl Pharisee, in the Lords, brags about this Christian nation.

Mr. Shaddles's case came on at last, and the worthy man, being placed in the witness box, and having knocked up his green shade in his extreme eagerness to bring the inspired volume to his lips, gave his evidence against Paul with great bitterness, and held forward his discoloured eye for the examination of the magistrate. He looked rather disappointed that the latter did not recoil with horror at the sight, but Mr. Prior was in the habit of seeing so many dozen black eyes a-week—inasmuch as a mechanic's wife seldom appeared in court without one at least—that he merely glanced at it with a quiet "Humph—ah." Mr. Shaddles was then about to call his daughters as witnesses, when Paul begged that his admission of having struck the blow which produced the effect exhibited might save these young ladies the trouble of being sworn.

The policeman who had been cautioned by Mr. Shaddles then got into the box.

"From information which I had received your worship I watched Mrs. Sellinger's ouse in Spelton Street where a dance was being carried on. At twenty minutes to twelve I eard a gent in the all say that there would be a row in two-twoes to which the other replied and no mistake. The

door was open your worship and a cab at the door number 2642."

"What do you talk that nonsense for?" said the magistrate. "Do you mean that there are two thousand six hundred houses in Spelton Street?"

The officer had learned his lesson so well, that being interrupted put him out, and he considered for a minute. Then he looked uncomfortably at the magistrate and said, in a low and troubled voice,

"The cab, your worship."

"Very well," said Mr. Prior, "then you should have said the cab."

"Number 2642," resumed the officer, going off again in good style, "and many coats and hats in the passage which I kep my eye upon. Hearing screams I ran up the steps and see the parlour door—"

"Saw the parlour door," murmured the magistrate, by way of protest, but did not stop the witness.

"Open and this person," pointing to Mr. Shaddles, "a squaring up to this gentleman (Paul) and trying to hit him upon which this gentleman likewise square up."

"But he had knocked me down fust," bawled Mr. Shaddles, from the floor of the court.

“ Be quiet, Sir,” said Mr. Prior, “ you have given your evidence. The officer can swear only to what he witnessed.”

“ O, that be hanged ! ” said the excitable grocer, “ it’s all jugglery.”

“ You will be removed from the court if you make another such remark,” said Mr. Prior; “ you do not help your case by showing that your temper is so bad, that even in a court of justice you cannot refrain from misbehaviour.”

How the oppressed Misses Shaddles enjoyed this speech, and how they promised themselves the pleasure of reporting it to a rather nagging mamma they had at home ! It would be good stock for her.

“ Then the ladies and gents crowded round them and I just stepped to shet the street-door and then I came in and Shaddles gave this gentleman in charge and I locked him up your worship.”

“ But what right had you to lock him up ? ” said the magistrate. “ By your own account he was being assaulted, and only raised his hands in self-defence.”

The policeman knew all about it very well, having in truth watched the scene from the moment Angela, in her Apollo dress, had been drawn into the room, to the discomfiture of the dancers.

“ I took him out of the house your worship as

was wished by Mrs. Sellinger and all the parties, but he was locked up for rather obstropulous conduct in the street."

"Put my daughter into the box," shouted Mr. Shaddles.

"How old is she?" inquired Mr. Prior. "Does she know the nature of an oath?"

"If she does not, Sir," said the chief clerk confidentially, "it is not her father's fault—he has been growling an accompaniment of curses all through the policeman's evidence."

"She's nineteen," said Mr. Shaddles: "here, Sarah, get into the box and tell the magistrate that you saw this fellow—"

"Hold your tongue, Sir," interrupted Mr. Prior. "Are you not ashamed to dictate to a witness, and that witness your own child, what she is to swear. I never knew an instance of more disgraceful behaviour."

The furious grocer was so seldom put into harness in this way, that little white streaks of foam actually showed themselves at the corners of his lips. He rubbed his stubby hands over one another, and glared fearfully as Miss Sarah took off a tight glove from a fat little hand, and pressed the Testament to her large pleasant-looking mouth.

"What did you see of this affray, Miss Shaddles?" said the magistrate.

“There was a young person brought into the room, Sir,” said Miss Shaddles, casting down her eyes (for she had a good deal of that middle-class modesty which hastens to fix upon any objectionable subject, and then disquiets itself therewith), “in a strange dress, though no doubt very proper in its place, and some unpleasanliness was felt, though I dare say no offence was meant.”

Sarah was determined to do her best for Paul, if only to beat her father.

“Of that you can hardly judge,” said Mr. Prior. “But come to the assault.”

“I did not see the assault, Sir,” said Miss Shaddles, “for I was dancing at the other end of the room; but when I came up, papa was fighting with Mr. Chequerbent, and had received a shocking blow, and I was so terrified on his account that I am quite unable to give any further information.”

“You have proved nothing yet, Mr. Shaddles,” said the magistrate. “There is your daughter, naturally anxious to make the best case she can for you, but she only swears that you were fighting. Can the other young lady prove more?”

“I don’t think so, Sir,” said Miss Sarah, “because she was my *vis-à-vis*.”

“Why, I could bring a dozen witnesses,” cried

Shaddles, " who all saw him hit me the moment I called him an offensive puppy."

" It is all very well to say that you *could*," said Mr. Prior, with provoking calmness, " but I sit here to decide on the evidence that *is* brought. You admit that you used exceedingly objectionable language, and from your conduct here to-day, insulting the court, dictating to a witness, and uttering blasphemies in the hearing of the officials, I think that quite probable, though I might hesitate to believe it on your own unaided testimony. Have you anything to say?" he added, turning to Paul.

The policeman gave a look as much as to say, " Not such a flat," but he was in error.

" Only, Sir, that none of us behaved too creditably; but as I have been locked up—I mean as I have been in the station-house all night, perhaps—"

" Serve you right, and I hope you will remember it. The case is dismissed."

Paul was soon out of court, and was received in the passage by Angela, who was all smiles and delight, and who looked so pretty that we must not be too hard upon Paul for being unable to resist the temptation of again postponing his journey to Aspen, in order to take her to dine somewhere or other. I could say where, but as there is no place in all London where one can

give a lady a casual and decent dinner in privacy and comfort, I see no use in asking Mr. Bentley to advertise the establishment in question. If I were not sure that, wherever it was, they had to sit in a cold room, or a hot room, or a dirty room, and with a number of other people; that the things they wanted were not in the *carte*, and that half the things they ordered were badly cooked; that either the men in the room stared at the lady, or the waiters looked surprised she should come there; that the wine was low in scale and high in price, and that generally the whole thing was felt to be a mistake, I would gladly mention the place, and so I will, whenever a London *restaurateur* has brains enough to take a lesson from his Parisian rival. Meantime, my brothers, eat with women in private houses only.

Liberavi animam meam.

One is afraid to think in what frame of mind the defeated Shaddles took home his daughters and his black eye. Nor was his discomfiture complete until his neighbours, with usual neighbourly kindness, called his attention to the police report in the next day's paper. The conscientious reporter, with whom Mrs. Sellinger had kindly tried to tamper, would not be swayed from his duty to the journal he represented, and gave a full and graphic account of the case. But by some accident Mr. Chequerbent's name was

muddled into Speckleback, or something equally unlikely to be recognised by Messrs. Molesworth and Penkridge. I cannot think that this was a wilful blunder,—it must have been an error of the press—for the excellent reporter, in his exceeding desire to be accurate, not only gave Mr. Shaddles's name and address with perfect correctness, but, to prevent a possibility of mistake, added what he must have learned from Paul's friend, the policeman—“The complainant is a tradesman, who has several times been fined for cheating the poor, by ‘riding the monkey’ and other devices for giving false weights, and who has boasted that another week of short weights always repaid him his fine with interest, leaving him the rest of the cheating as clear profit on the quarter.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEMONS OF THE CAPE.

LORD ROOKBURY, privately deciding that for once Mr. Acton Calveley was right, and that the Misses Wilmslow were very pretty, proceeded to cultivate their acquaintance forthwith, and being, as has been observed, a very gentlemanly old nobleman, speedily made himself acceptable. He entered so easily into the zoological occupation of the moment, and seemed to take so much interest in the assembled menagerie, that the girls were quite delighted with him, and began to consult his opinion on points of training and education, as if he had been their friend and confidant since their respective christenings. And as he chatted away, the old Sybarite duly noted and approved Emma's brown curls, and Kate's large eyes, and, despite Amy's shawls, and rather moped look, he made out that she varied and completed a charming group, and he half-resolved to order down a painter, and have a sketch made, for the adornment of one of his rooms. It was a sad thing that the old man's appreciation of physical beauty was so keen, while his regard for moral beauty

was so stagnant;—a classical scholar, too, as he was, and one who might have learned from Horace, and other virtuous writers, how superior mind is to matter, and so forth.

Mr. Wilmslow, meantime, was pacing from room to room up-stairs, in great disquiet concerning the errand of the visitor. But at last Carlyon came in, and Henry Wilmslow, calling him behind a door, intimated, with great mystery, and many grimaces, that he suspected a Philistine was about.

“No, no,” said Bernard, “Philistines don’t ride horses like that I saw at the door. I will reconnoitre, however.” And hearing voices in the garden, he went down, and found the young ladies exceedingly amused at a story Lord Rookbury was telling them about a sea-crab, which had, by some accident, been dropped from a cart, and left on the green of an inland village, the inhabitants of which were very Protestant, but not very well informed. The Earl was saying that such a thing had never been seen by the oldest inhabitant, and he was describing, with much humour, the proceedings at a public meeting, which was called to consider the queer-looking stranger, and at which it was decided, by a large majority, that the hideous creature must be one of those Roman Catholics, of whom they had heard so much. As Carlyon came out into the garden, the girls all

called to him at once that he must come and hear one of the best stories in the world.

“All Lord Rookbury’s stories are the best stories in the world,” said Carlyon, raising his hat. The Earl returned his salute, and eyed him keenly, it was hard to say whether favourably or not. The girls looked much surprised; in fact, his lordship had not mentioned his name, and had at once begun to talk so pleasantly, that it did not occur to them to consider whether he had one.

“O, are you Lord Rookbury, Sir?” said little Amy, with her usual straightforwardness.

“Dear me, did I not say so?” said the Earl; “I thought I had introduced myself. I must make you all sorts of apologies. I sent in my card, however, and fancied it had been brought to you. This gentleman received it, I suppose, as he knows me.”

“No,” said Bernard; “and the servant has evidently suppressed it. Mr. Wilmslow is unaware of your lordship’s visit; I will find him.”

“A relation?” asked Lord Rookbury, as Carlyon went off; “you have no brother, I think, Miss Wilmslow?” he said, addressing Kate.

“Emma is Miss Wilmslow,” said Kate, handing the inquiry to her sister to be answered, and with a little blush, which did not escape the Rookbury eye.

“That is Mr. Bernard Carlyon,” said Emma; “he is no relation, but he comes from the firm of

lawyers, who managed our trial, and he is staying with us."

"Understands all about the estate, eh? A very gentlemanly person, apparently," said the Earl.

"I think he understands all about everything," put in Amy; "don't you, Kate?"

There was another show of colour; the young lady's "blood looked out," and Lord Rookbury "looked on't,"—so, whichever of the "Winter's Tale" readings, old or new, may be preferred, our quotation will do.

"A pleasant companion in the country, and not a bad one in town," said the Earl. "What do you say, Miss Kate?"

"We all like him very much," said Kate, "and he is very good and attentive."

"Not lately," said the accurate Amy, with a becoming expression of petulance; "not since the time came when he began to go out by himself, and stay away nobody knows how long; and if he does not behave better, I shall tell him to go back to London. He has no business to neglect me now that I am getting stronger, and he might be of use in walking me about, and reading to me. He knows that I do not read French fast enough to enjoy the stories half so much as when he translates."

"Sad fellow, to neglect duties which he seems to have begun so well," said Lord Rookbury; "I must talk to him, if you'll let me?"

“How can you be so silly, Amy?” said Emma; “I am sure that nobody could be more kind than Bernard was, all the time you were ill.”

“And is that any reason for his being unkind when I get well?” demanded resolute Amy, who stood to her guns.

“Bernard, too,” said the Earl to himself. “All very pretty. Ha! here comes the king of the castle—blessed donkey, by all accounts—looks it too.” And he advanced to meet Wilmslow, who came forth in a great flustration, blundering out half a dozen contradictory lies, by way of excuse for his delay. The Earl said but few words, but they were so kind and graceful, and so exactly expressed the congratulation which one large-acred gentleman should offer to another on the recovery of his rights, without making so much fuss about it as should imply that it was a matter of grave concern. He cordially welcomed Wilmslow into their county, with a manner which said that now, perhaps, the county might go on decently. And then he complimented Wilmslow upon his charming family, in a way which really intimated that the world owed him gratitude for having favoured it with such a group; and Wilmslow almost began to believe that he had been a model father and educator, and, at that moment, a very little brandy would have made him quite sentimental.

“Haw, yes, my lord,” said Henry the humbug,

drawing Kate to him, in a most affectionate manner, "after all, there's nothing like one's children,—aw. They make one happy, when nothing else could." And certainly, that was the only time he tried the experiment.

"That," said the Earl, who always took his cue at a moment's notice, "that, and the society of their mother. I am, unhappily, a widower, and the solace of female sympathy is therefore denied me, but the memory of my own married happiness teaches me to appreciate that of others, and yours, Mr. Wilmslow, is, I know, singular."

"An admirable person, in every respect, is my wife, yes, though I say it that shouldn't say it," responded Henry, "and I wonder where the devil the woman's got to."

"I trust to see Mrs. Wilmslow," said the Earl, "if only to assure her that I hope she will remember we are neighbours. Rookton is not quite what it ought to be—what place is, without a lady?—but I have some pictures, and the conservatories are in good order. I ought to be a great deal more ceremonious, but these young ladies have made me feel as if I had known you all for years."

"Quite right, my Lord," said Wilmslow, feeling perfectly comfortable, as Lord Rookbury had intended. "Ceremony is all walker among people whose position in society makes them sure there

is no mistake" (the Ambassador was coming out); "and if the aristocracy of England cannot afford to waive ceremonials among themselves, who the doose can?"

"You be hanged, with your aristocracy, you insolvent snob," was the indignant reply thought by Lord Rookbury, though, for that matter, he had no right to think it, for, as we have seen, the Wilmslows came in at the Conquest, or said they did, whereas the Rookburys were strictly anonymous until the Revolution, points which should be remembered in estimating the worth of our fellow-creatures.

"*We'll* waive it, at any rate, Mr. Wilmslow," said the Earl, and continued to talk in a familiar off-hand way until Mrs. Wilmslow arrived. And then his manner gradually changed, for though he knew perfectly well that these Wilmslows were living in a corner of their house, and had been very needy, and had still no money to spare, and could not visit their richer neighbours, he knew a little too about feminine nature. And though the free-and-easy style was just the thing to please Henry, the Earl was aware that a well-regulated English matron has no idea of being condescended to, and he was much too wary to let Mrs. Wilmslow think he wanted to make allowance for her want of means, and to get her to come in undignified fashion to Rookton. So, while nothing could be

pleasanter than his manner to Jane, there was also nothing in it which could make her think his lordship did not suppose she had a dozen carriages and a troop of horses on the other side the garden, instead of *not* having there the two little ponies of her ambition. He made no attempt at an engagement, knowing that Mrs. Wilmslow would like to receive a formal invitation, duly carded and crested and so forth, but after walking about the great hall with the family, finding a likeness to Emma in one of the family portraits, and holding that young lady's hair from her face in order to make the resemblance more striking, he mounted his impatient horse and departed, a good deal pleased with the ladies of the family, and leaving them and their head a good deal pleased with him.

Just on going away Lord Rookbury said, as if suddenly recollecting the subject,

"I don't see your friend, Mr. Carlyon—but he hunts, I think. Tell him that Thursday is the last day, and that they meet at Featherstone-edge. I dare say he knows it, though, and I shall see him there. But perhaps Miss Kate will say so to him for me."

The message was duly delivered by Kate, who wanted to know whether Bernard had been acquainted with Lord Rookbury, and how he came to recognise his lordship so readily.

"I never spoke to him until to-day," said Car-

lyon, "but I have occasionally heard him lecture the House of Lords. And the face is not one which it is easy to forget."

"And do you go and hear the speeches in Parliament?" asked Kate.

"Sometimes. One likes to see machinery at work, you know."

"And sometimes, I dare say, you wish that you were part of the machinery, is it not so?"

"I don't know. I never wish. But," he said laughing, "I should make a very good member of Parliament, for I can hold my tongue, which is a remarkable gift in days when everybody can speak. If one could only push one's talents a little further, and be the only member in the House who could not read. Imagine the being independent of all the best sources of information."

"It is all very well to talk nonsense," said Kate gravely, "but I believe you would distinguish yourself very much, and that you think so yourself."

"Well, when I have a chance, I shall expect you to lurk behind the ladies' grating, and judge me. And now let us see about the grating for your rabbit-hutch."

But on the Thursday, Carlyon was at the meet of the Z. P. H., at Featherstone-edge. He had managed to get a pretty good mount from the town nearest Aspen, and as he rode light, and

with judgment, had upon three or four previous occasions kept a fair place for a gentleman who dropped in upon the hunt as an amateur. He had not ridden over anybody, certainly, but then nobody had ridden over him, which was something, and I need hardly say he had escaped being sworn at for any blundering. Altogether, though not riding a horse which permitted him to do more than get respectably through the business, he had made the best use of his materials. To-day the hounds soon found, and an extraordinarily good run followed. The pace was desperately telling, and of the few who saw the last death of the season, Lord Rookbury and Bernard Carlyon were two. But while the splendid hunter from the Rookton Woods stable looked more splendid than ever, as he sprang eagerly into the field where Reynard the Fox was dying mute, like Bertram Risinghame in the church, Carlyon's more plebeian animal, though he had got through his work gallantly, "struggling, yet stemming all," and bringing his rider to the post of honour, gave unmistakeable signs of being thoroughly done up.

Lord Rookbury had bowed courteously to Carlyon at the cover-side, and had immediately sent up the stranger above five hundred per cent. in the estimation of the observant members of the Z. P. H. He waited until the last rites were over, and then rode up to Bernard.

“I thought it would be so, Mr. Carlyon,” he said, nodding at the distressed horse of the latter, “and you have managed admirably to get him here. You are just sixteen miles from home. My groom will meet me with a fresh horse somewhere about. Do me the favour to take that, we’ll leave this fellow at Torling, the hamlet over there, and if you will come and lunch with me at Rookton Woods, we’ll send you home to-night, or in the morning, or when you like.”

Worse offers may be made to a man on a jaded horse sixteen miles from home, and in an hour from that time the Earl and Carlyon were descending a bridle-path which led them to Rookton Woods.

The house was somewhat curiously situated. The original owner, or his architect, had selected the centre of a small valley, or rather a species of basin, surrounded by wooded slopes, for the site of the mansion, which however, though it lay low, as regarded much of the circumjacent country, was placed upon a gentle elevation in the midst of the basin. Into this basin water was turned on, for a pretty, clear little river, plashing over stones, wound round two-thirds of the central mound—it was scarcely more—and was crossed by a couple of bridges, one of stone and pretentious, the other rustic and effective. The house itself was one of those “modern Gothics” from which Mr. Old-

buck so devoutly prayed to be delivered, but which, though defenceless in point of taste, was singularly defensible as a most convenient and luxurious dwelling. It is possible that no ingenuity could have drawn a faithful plan of the confused and miscellaneous apartments which shot out, struck out, and jutted out, according to their degrees of prominence, from the external sides, on which advanced towards one another, crossed, or ran parallel in the centre, but at any rate there was a noble dining-room, a range of capital drawing-rooms, a comfortable library, a picture gallery, and a billiard-room, a ball-room, (with a large organ in it,) besides "all the ordinary requirements of a nobleman's mansion." And, after all, a house is made to live in.

"There is Rookton below us," said the Earl, as the narrow bridle-path emerged from among some lofty leafless elms. "It was built, in part, by an ancestor of mine, who found his account in bribing the Duchess of Kendal, George the First's mistress, a good deal. I'll show you her picture. An ugly wretch. I believe she cheated us in some way, too, after all our trouble in corrupting her, which proves that she was unprincipled as well as ugly."

"Was that the lady who thought the king's soul revisited her in the form of a rook?" said Carlyon.

“No, hang it,” said the Earl, “not a rook—a raven. For the honour of one’s crest let us be exact. I should be ashamed to think that a rook had called on a favourite when her loving king was dead, and no more was to be got by the humiliation.”

After riding nearly round the house, they descended, and getting upon the carriage-road, which curved at a lower elevation, and a gentle slope from the public road, three quarters of a mile off, they crossed the stone bridge, and reached the house.

“Now, Mr. Carlyon,” said Lord Rookbury, as they stood in the spacious hall, where the coloured glass threw upon a few admirable pieces of sculpture that cheerful false light which answers for sunshine when the real article is not procurable, “I will first entrust you, for your bodily comfort, to the care of Jameson here, and, after some lunch, we will settle other arrangements.”

Was it Canning, or somebody else, who, hearing a virgin orator of some promise sailing very safely through a sea of common-places, remarked,—

“Confound that young man, why don’t he risk himself a little?”

Bernard Carlyon risked himself a good deal that day.

I am not going to justify him, or anybody else. But it should be recollected that Bernard had

much upon his mind. Firstly, he was in love. Next, he had had a most mystifying and apparently ridiculous proposition made to him by the guardian of the lady of his dreams, and the consideration of the subject had occupied him day and night, and by no means tended to keep his mind in that healthy state at which it has perfect control over the body. Thirdly, he had ridden very hard for sixteen miles, and less hard for four more, but then, during the last stage, he had been talking to an Earl of so much age and note, that he was almost an institution of the country, and you may mumble as much as you like about all mankind being equal, as of course they are, but there is an excitement in the effort to hold your own with a celebrity—peer, cook, or even book-writer. Lastly, the Earl of Rookbury gave Bernard some extraordinarily fine Madeira.

No part of this history shall be shirked; and whatever damage I may do to the character of my hitherto unobjectionable, and I may say courageous, chivalrous, and intelligent Bernard, I will not deny that at this artistic lunch, and under the agency of wine, round which the Demons of the Cape had howled, as it lay trembling, years before, in the dark hold, and which now came forth for his especial discomfiture, Mr. Bernard Carlyon unbosomed himself to Lord Rookbury in a way which, on his first interview with a noble-

man, be he ever so affable, a young gentleman is seldom encouraged to adopt.

But it was not entirely, or in the main, his own doing. That artful Earl, who had been advantageously impressed by Bernard's manners, and evident talent, amused himself by drawing him out. And Lord Rookbury was an old hand, and had lived in the days when men could laugh and drink—vulgaries happily exploded. He had an ample supply of anecdote, when he chose to be lazy, and of wit, when he chose to take the trouble to talk. His manner was peculiarly agreeable, if he so willed it. He passed his Madeira, (a philtre he had tried upon many an hereditary legislator, and many an aspiring candidate, with singular success as a test of their contents,) as matter of course, and as hardly worth calling wine, while he occupied the attention of Bernard with his own shrewd and fascinating discourse, and ultimately succeeded in inducing that young person to open the flood-gates of his feelings. And when a person of habitual and strong self-command, and also of strong will, loses the one, and surrenders the other, it may be superfluous to say that he gets very demonstrative indeed.

Therefore, and urged by the Demons of the Cape, did Bernard Carlyon set forth to the amused and listening peer, that, proud as was his position and beautiful as was his estate, he,

Bernard, would some day achieve a proud position and a beautiful estate too. That he felt he had it in him, and he confidently demanded of Lord Rookbury whether there were not egregious fools in both Houses of Parliament who were listened to, and who rose in the State. To which the Earl willingly assented, confirming his opinion by a great oath. Then Carlyon put it, logically, that if he, not being an egregious fool, could obtain such a start as the unwise persons in question, he should rise. Bernard then waxed almost pathetic, and stated his case as that of a young, talented, well-educated man, and a gentleman, who, in the present vicious state of society, had no means of living, but by linking himself to a worn-out system of falsehood, called law, the technicalities of which disgusted him, while its practical and cruel injustice offended his sense of humanity. He dwelt upon the hardship of having to grind out his heart at the wheel, for the sake of a morsel of bread, while less gifted persons were making name and wealth—winning beautiful and affectionate wives, and having children growing up around them. Lord Rookbury made faces at these last points, but generally agreed with Bernard, and gave him more wine. Finally, Bernard burst out into a comprehensive peroration, in which he rather neatly summed up his own

hopes and merits, and unsparingly denounced the whole system, including the law, the church, the senate, and the aristocracies of rank and of mammon, which forbade him to earn an honourable and gentlemanly livelihood. There, his exceedingly improper conduct is told, and I am heartily shocked at it.

Lord Rookbury was not shocked at all. He saw no harm in being intoxicated, or in any other vice whatever that amused one's-self or annoyed one's enemy. His own first public appearance had been in a state of drunkenness, as we have recorded, on the night of the Nelson funeral, and he had repeated that representation once or twice since. No man lost in the estimation of the Earl of Rookbury by being drunk, unless he proved himself a snob in his cups. Now Bernard Carlyon, not in thick speech, or broken voice, but in unfaltering and audacious language, had told Lord Rookbury, at his own hearthstone, certain things, utterly improper to be spoken in a well-regulated and orderly age, and least of all, to a respectable nobleman; but, after all, things which may not be utterly disconnected with truth, and which, in early life, and before we grow orthodox fatalists, a good many promising young people are ill-educated enough to feel. One great advantage of temperance is that a

temperate man is never betrayed into such unseemly expositions.

Then did Lord Rookbury, with much affected carelessness and real art, seek to elicit from Bernard a variety of particulars touching Aspen Court and its owners. But here the accomplished nobleman signally failed, for Bernard would not be pumped. He would speak of nobody's affairs but his own, and, put the questions as he would, the Earl could get nothing that was available. And he saw, too, that this was not the result of the stolidity, which sometimes, I am told, follows the first excitement of wine, but was obviously the fruit of an acquired habit of not talking idly on other people's affairs. Lord Rookbury noted this, and rather applauded it. However, he determined to risk another shot. Passing the wine, he said,

“Well, my young friend, I think you have only done justice to yourself in securing one of the Aspen heiresses. And so we will drink her health.”

Carlyon was more nearly restored to his entire senses by this speech than one would have believed it possible for a man to be. But every puppet has one string which runs through all its frame-work, and only find that, and you may convulse your puppet at your will. He had, in

his recent indignant declamation, instinctively avoided the slightest reference to his hopes in regard to Lilian. He took it for granted that Lord Rookbury had received some intimation on the subject. Another evil of drinking, young people, is, that it sometimes makes you too intelligent.

“I have no right,” said Bernard, “to think of that which you refer to. I would not refuse such a toast, but it must not be so introduced.”

“No right, my dear Bernard?” said his Lordship, paternally. “All the right in the world. I am an old man, and I know what young ladies mean by their looks. You have her affections, and the deuce is in it if, with your talents, you cannot manage the rest. Come, her health, I say. Miss Kate Wilmslow.”

Bernard was conscious of a very curious sensation, a mixture of shock and irritation, and—a very little self-reproach. For he had for some time entertained certain faint suspicions, which he had chosen to stifle, but which, when the subject was thus brought up, prevented his meeting the Earl’s eye with quite the steadiness he ought to have shown.

“Your Lordship utterly mistakes,” he said, gravely.

“Of course I do—we old men always mistake everything—and you look as if I mistook, Mr.

Carlyon. However, I have no right to refer to such a matter—only, when it is no longer a mystery, perhaps you will remember that the old Earl told you the young lady's heart was yours."

And Bernard's conscience told him that he believed it too, and in his state of bewilderment he did not make a very effective disclaimer of any such hopes, and Lord Rookbury listened, bowed in a gentlemanly manner, not accepting it in the least, and changed the subject.

They continued to chat, Carlyon improving the impression he had made upon the Earl, and, though talking with remarkable unreserve, talking neither flippantly nor foolishly. And Lord Rookbury occasionally put forth one of his best and bitterest sarcasms, and found no dull or unappreciative listener. Veiled or patent, the epigram told with Bernard. Besides, he happened to have read a little; and even though one of Lord Rookbury's *mots* based itself on a political "situation" or a court intrigue of the remote date of twenty years back, Carlyon was not so completely mystified by the allusion as most of the ruck of young men of society would have been. He actually contrived to tell the Earl two good things of Luttrell's, which Lord Rookbury had either never heard or forgotten; and in these days, when everything gets into print, a single new and good thing is worth gratitude.

They enfranchise the black who finds a diamond over a certain number of carats;—what shall be done unto the man who presents you with an epigram to which, at your own first rehearsal, an auditor shall not say, “Doosed good, but older than the person you give it to?”

“By the way,” said the Earl, “I should tell you, that as soon as I had secured you for dinner, I thought the most hospitable thing would be to ask old Seymour—the man with the white hat who fell at the brook—to send up word to Aspen Court, as he passed through the village in his way home. So they will not think that you have broken your neck, if you give me the pleasure of your company until to-morrow. Oh, don’t think about dress. The only lady you will see—and whom you certainly will not see when you come over with the Wilmslows—does not mind slippers. We will go through the rooms, if you like; there is light enough to show you where the pictures are, though scarcely to see what they are.”

Bernard rather approved of this arrangement, and the Earl showed him the principal rooms of which we have made mention, and especially the picture gallery. In this, nearly the whole of the contents of which had been gathered by Lord Rookbury himself, Carlyon rather expected to find works of a class more akin to the habits of mind and speech of the owner than were the paintings collected

there. But he found not] the expansive carnal charms of Titian and Etty, the spiritual yet still womanly loveliness of Guido, nor that meretricious cross-breed in art by which the modern French school contrives to depict the Magdalén with the united attractions of Palestine and the Palais-Royal. The majority of the pictures were Dutch, landscape and interior, long dreary wastes of lead-coloured dykes, or the stereotype brace of boors, one drinking, the other tumultuously fondling a hideous landlady. It was odd.

“I know what you think,” said the Earl, after watching Bernard’s survey, which was very rapidly completed. His eye was not an artist’s, and it hungered for a little graceful form and pleasant colour. “You would give all my canvas for an Italian sky, with nymphs at noon; eh?”

“No, but I think I would warm your Lordship’s gallery with just two or three pictures that did not suggest the impending ague or the approaching constable.”

“You are right, perhaps. But do you know this—that I hate to be cheated? Now I should never be quite sure about an Italian or Spanish picture; connoisseurs know no difference between originals and copies, let them say what they like; and dealers are—dealers. Personally, I do not care a farthing whether a picture that pleases me was executed at Florence by Raphael, or in War-

dour Street by Levi Daub. But I should not like to know that people who had stayed here said at dinner, that the Rookton collection was well enough, but that the only original in the house was Lord Rookbury."

"Everybody says those things. An Englishman has described as a copy, a picture by Rubens, that has never been out of the chamber in which he executed it."

"I do not like it—that's all. Now you know one can't be cheated in these Dutch pictures; they have been in few hands, and every one of them has an authenticated pedigree of ownership. Their legitimacy is untarnished."

"So be it," said Bernard; "I prefer something pretty, and don't desire legitimacy."

"Very well," said the Earl, smiling, "possibly Rookton may be able to satisfy even that combination of taste. But now I must write some letters for town. I think you have the *carte du pays*; in the library you will find some good prints, the London papers, and some French novels; perhaps you can make out till the bell rings."

Bernard, left alone, established himself in a luxurious easy chair, and began to review the last few hours. The active but evanescent excitement under which he had enlightened Lord Rookbury, passed away, and Mr. Carlyon began to feel

peculiarly dissatisfied with himself. He was angry that he had not remembered how unfitted, at the moment, he had been for resisting the influence of wine, and though in trying to recall what he had said to Lord Rookbury, he could recollect nothing of which he needed to be ashamed, he knew what abysses there are in one's memory of a revel, and what ugly things another memory will sometimes evoke from them. Still, he was convinced that his intellect had been at high-pressure all the time, and he felt tolerably sure that he had been preserved from *naïsserie*—the thing Carlyon chiefly feared in this life. It was tolerably clear, too, that he had not annoyed Lord Rookbury, for, if he had, he felt, from what he had made out of that amiable nobleman's character, that he should have been politely dismissed, and half way to Aspen by that time. Somewhat consoled by these recollections, and resolving to keep guard on himself for the rest of the day, he took up *tome premier* of a Parisian novel, and the pedantic levity of its introduction soon brought its own antidote.

He must have slept for a couple of hours, when a small soft hand was placed in his own, and a distinct young voice mixed in his dream:—

“Papa says that you are to take me in to dinner.”

Bernard sprang up, retaining the little hand,

however, and found himself in darkness, the open door, at the end of the long library, showing the lighted hall at a distance. He could just make out that his companion was a little girl, and that her hair, on which a ray of the far-off light glistened, was crowned with a white coronal.

“Did you speak to me more than once, dear?” said Bernard, as soon as he had recollected himself.

“Who is Lilian?” said the child. “You *might* tell me who Lilian is, before we go in.”

Carlyon bit his lip, and felt more wroth with himself than he had done for a long time.

“Talk in my sleep, too?” he muttered, quite bitterly; “what is my next foolery? Lilian, dear?” he said to the child; “O, she is the lady of a pretty song, ‘Airy, fairy, Lilian.’ Shall I teach it you by-and-by?”

“I thought saints did not sing songs, only hymns,” said the little lady.

“Saints?”

“Yes; you are a saint, you know. Papa told me to fetch you, and that your name was Saint Bernard, and that he knew you would like me, for that you had told him so.”

“Ah!” said Bernard, after a pause; “I think I see. Well, dear, let me take you in to dinner.”

She laid her arm on his wrist, and they emerged into the light, where Carlyon could examine his

new friend. She was a fairy-like little thing, with delicate waxen features, almost too regular for prettiness. She was exquisitely dressed, but with far too much elaboration, and her toilet seemed the work of half a dozen French maids, in the innumerable details of its tiny perfections. Even jewellery, in miniature, was arrayed on her small arms and taper fingers; ear-rings sparkled in her ears, and she carried an infinitesimal feather-fan. *Mise à raser*, had she been fifteen years older, but it was some amends that the voice and manner were childish still.

“ You have found our guest, eh, Lurline,” said the Earl.

“ Yes; and he is going to teach me a song, papa.”

“ Ah! but you mustn’t flirt with him too much, or eyes, twice as large as yours, will open at you. And now for dinner.”

The evening passed away pleasantly enough, Lord Rookbury being particularly agreeable, and Carlyon being desirous of effacing, in some degree, the recollection of his outbreak in the morning. He did not succeed in this attempt, however, for while they lingered over some incomparable claret, the Earl suddenly said:—

“ Mr. Carlyon, the confidence you have thought proper to place in me to-day is my excuse for making you an offer which perhaps there is no

reason for your acceptance ; and in that case suppose it not made."

"I am glad," said Carlyon, frankly, "that your Lordship gives me an opportunity of saying what certainly ought to be said before I leave Rookton, namely, that under ridiculous excitement which—"

"If you are going to abuse my Madeira, I will not hear you," said the Earl. "Four bottles of that wine, judiciously administered, once preserved the religion of these realms—the minority in the Commons, against a most sacrilegious motion being converted into a majority, by the Secretary to the Treasury and myself dosing two church reformers at Bellamy's until they were much too drunk to stumble into the lobby. Respect it, therefore."

"But, only, as I am not a church reformer," said Carlyon, laughing, "I may—"

"A pretty speech for St. Bernard," said the Earl; "read your own history. But nonsense apart, you have nothing to say, and if you regret that a glass of my wine made you franker than I deserved you should be with me, I do not. Now, I was going to say this. You have told me your distaste for your own profession, and I have studied you enough to know that you ought to aim at a showier if not a higher game. Opportunities do not exactly drop from the skies, except in novels ; but, as somebody says in a play, though

we never know what Providence may do for us, it is always as well to be in Providence's way. Now I think I can put you in a tolerable place for the start, but when the flag falls, you must make good running. Do you know Francis Selwyn?"

"The Minister?"

"Yes,—for the present."

"He wants a private secretary, and would answer any nomination of mine by asking what day my friend would come."

"And you are good enough to think of me, Lord Rookbury," said Bernard with a sparkling eye.

"Think of yourself. Of course it is not what an ambitious young man dreams of, and, I dare say, if you were writing a book, you would picture my turning out one of the old members for this county, and returning you to Parliament, where your maiden speech would set all Europe rejoicing. But no race is ever run quite so fast as on paper. I think that if you please Selwyn, he will, on being ejected from office, get you something else, and you may make your way."

"How to thank your lordship—"

"I'll tell you. I like to see my men win. I am accused of taking up whims, and if you are modest, like all good young men, and think yourself undeserving of my assistance, why, fancy that I have taken you up as a whim. Only vindicate

my choice, and don't let me be laughed at. Miss Lurline, what are you looking so wistful about?"

"I want St. Bernard to teach me the song about Lilian," said the child plaintively.

"Ah, very true—saints should keep their word. So I shall leave him to do it while I go and write to Frank Selwyn. Is it understood, Mr. Carlyon, or would you like to sleep upon it?"

"Not a moment's delay, my Lord, on my account. I shall only too gladly avail myself of a kindness which I shall ever remember."

"Nobody ever remembers kindness," replied the Earl. "Don't be behind your age. But remember that *I like to see my men win.*"

CHAPTER XVI.

"WITH A KISS AND WITH A PRAYER."

LORD ROOKBURY had not miscalculated the weight of his influence with the Minister, and in a couple of days after Carlyon's return to Aspen Court, he received a packet from Rookton Woods, in which was a letter from Mr. Selwyn, requesting his attendance in London as early as possible. With this was a note from Lord Rookbury, who exhorted Bernard to make the best use of his time; for the hours of the Ministry were supposed to be numbered, and it would be well to be in at the death. Bernard ought to have left Aspen instantly on receiving this despatch, and he did leave it, riding hard, but not in order to catch the next up-train to London.

Miss Trevelyan was at home, and would see him.

What a curious sensation that is which troubles a man upon such a mission! Why does the elegantly arranged sentence, studied with so much care, in order alike to avoid formality and familiarity, begin to seem bald, and bold, and bungling, just as it is about to be wanted? Why is it finally

revised upon the coarse mat in the hall, and utterly rejected upon the silky mat on the landing? Why do you feel choking, as with thirst, and yet could not drink the elixir of life if it were presented to you? Why would you pay a hundred guineas a step to have the staircase twice as long as it is, and yet you go up as hastily as if you were escaping from a poor relation? Why does that pleasing bow, with which you have so often stooped to conquer—you know it—seem to you at once a great deal too low, and a great deal too slight, and altogether abominable? Why do you wish you had put on that other cravat? In short, why is your sense so keenly awakened to the outward man, and to the outside phrase, and why do you forget that you have hitherto looked like a gentleman and spoken like a philosopher, and generally done your duty in that state of life in which it has pleased Providence to place you, and that there is no particular reason why, at one o'clock this fine day, you should make a failure? Is it a satisfactory answer to say that all this is because there sits in the low chair near the window, in that drawing-room, a bright-eyed young person of the other sex, who, if you could only see it, can hardly hold her crochet-work for her tremor, who knows intensely well what you mean and what you have come for, and who designs to make you the kindest possible answer,

poor thing! If she should be able to find proper work, and who, in the meantime, is in about as fit a condition to criticise you as I am to correct the Jupiter Symphony or the Nautical Almanac. Let me appeal to some of my friends whether I have over-stated the case. There is Captain Pounder, that big handsome man with the black whiskers, who, in one of those dreadful Pugwashights, rode slowly up a slope of three-quarters of a mile towards a fort from which our dear Oriental brethren were blazing upon us with twenty cannone, and remarked to his comrades, as he dashed singly into the narrow breach, that he would "wait inside,"—just ask that tunniless person how he felt when going to propose to Laura Green of the Engineers. Or speak to the Secretary of State for the Unexecuting Department, who thinks nothing of cracking a soaring and excited House of Commons at midnight, dragging a crewmate out of a mess, and like Tybiles, tearing the strongest battle of his antagonists, amid shouts that would dismay a nation. Only ask how it was that he went three times to make a personal offer to Lady Asphodel Winglington, and at last was obliged to do it in a beautiful despatch-letter, I mean. Do not talk to me about saint hearts and fair ladies—of course, we know that many an estimable female is very good-natured, and will give you her hand just as

she would give you the salt or the nutcrackers, because you seem to be looking for it, and will in no degree appreciate your making such sentimental fuss about the matter (and a remarkably good partner such a woman will make, too, mind that), but our discourse at present is less of partnership than of marriage.

This digression has given Mr. Carlyon time to vanquish that singular little spasm in the throat, and to present himself with something like composure, though, if Lilian Trevelyan had looked carefully at his eyes, that young lady would have seen that they were peculiarly restless. Bernard was both glad and sorry to find that Lilian was alone. The gladness preponderated, for hosts of reasons, but men get very cowardly at times, and are not always sorry for an excuse for delaying what they have made up their minds to do. And then he thought that the golden hair never could have looked richer, the delicate complexion more fair, the blue eyes more radiant, nor the charming figure more graceful. Who was he, whispered the demon of timidity, sneakingly, that he should presume to claim such a creature for his own? Who was he, answered the demon of ambition, haughtily, the next moment,—actually a Minister's secretary, going to be a Member of Parliament, a Minister himself, Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Garter, Ambassador to France—who knows?

Balancing the suggestions of the evil ones, he saw no objection to remarking to Miss Trevelyan that the weather was delicious.

After some other profound observations of the same character had been made and answered, and it would have been clear to a third party, from the exceedingly absurd way in which the merest commonplaces were insisted upon and bungled, that these were flourishes to gain time, and that both these silly young people were sitting in mortal fear of what was coming next, Bernard fixed his eyes intently on one of those Bohemian paper-weights, which was on the table near Miss Trevelyan, and remarked to it that he was about to leave Gloucestershire for London.

“ So soon?” said Lilian. A ridiculous thing to say, seeing that the young man had been at Aspen Court more than a month.

“ Yes, immediately,” said Bernard. “ I hardly know,” he continued, “ whether I am intruding an uninteresting subject upon you in telling you why.”

He meant her to have replied—or, rather, how glad he would have been to hear her reply, “ Oh, no, Mr. Carlyon, I assure you I take a very great interest in anything that affects your welfare.” And yet, if she had said that, he afterwards would have been privately dissatisfied, and called it a species of advance, inconsistent with true deli-

cacy—men are such reasonable creatures. Perhaps it was as well she was silent, and only raised her blue eyes for a single second.

“A change has taken place in my prospects,” said Bernard, “and the course I had shaped out for myself has been altered by circumstances. I had looked forward to some years of toil and struggle at the bar, but an offer has been made me which will save me that which I have now the strongest reasons for valuing most, I mean time. The office of private secretary to one of the ministers has been offered me, with a probability of other advancement, and I have accepted it.”

“They will miss you sadly at Aspen Court,” said Miss Trevelyan, without looking up. This speech did not help Bernard at all.

“I shall leave Aspen Court to-night,” he said, “for it appears that there is a political crisis at hand, and—”

“And you must be there to assist,” said Miss Trevelyan, smiling a little mischievously.

“Eternal shame, if at the brunt,
Lord Ronald grace not battle’s front.”

“No,” said Carlyon, with an open smile, which he could afford, as he knew he had not been going to make a magniloquent speech, “but one does not want to come in at the latter end of a fray.”

“I am sure I shall always remember that once, at least, you came into a fray at the right time,

"Mr. Haywood," said Lillian. "And I always feel," he continued, "that you have never been properly thanked for your kindness. My poor son's ignorance is so little in the world that he scarcely knows how to express what I assure you he feels more deeply, and Mr. Haywood talks so easily that strangers do not know whether to be pleased or insulted, but he speaks to us about you in the warmest way."

"He is very good," said Bernard rather hastily, "but if you could possibly conceive Miss Trevelyan, how thankfully I look back upon the accident that introduced us, you would not speak of—of—anything else." That's right, Mr. Bernard, and begin to stutter and talk nonsense just because you think you see an opening.

"Miss Trevelyan," he continued, after a pause, "I am leaving the country, but it is impossible for me to go until I have said that—that which I came here to say." The poor Bohemian weight, how he did stare through and through it—he had much better have looked up to see how exquisitely lovely Lilian Trevelyan was, with the blush over her.

"You know nothing—next to nothing, of me—and assuredly it is not upon the circumstances that made us acquainted that I would presume in order to say more than our slight acquaintance warrants. I have no right to ask you a question, though there is a question which I would give the

world to ask, and my life to hear you answer as I desire. But will you hear me—will you allow me to speak—will you only listen to me—and then—if you wish it, I am gone—I will ask no word from you, not even a look, only permission to speak."

His voice faltered with emotion, and some of its tones sounded strangely on his own ear, but he knew that he was speaking earnestly. Could he only have known how much Lilian wished him to go on.

" You do not silence me," he said in a low and respectful tone; " do not fear that I will trespass on your exceeding goodness. Miss Trevelyan," he continued, rising and approaching the beautiful girl, and earnestly and below his breath, " there is no need to tell you that I love you, no hope to tell you how passionately and devotedly. I feel that you have read that for which I have no words. It is not of a love, too sacred, too intense for utterance, that I would speak to you now—on that, if hereafter you should give me one faint sign of the encouragement for which, at this moment, I dare not pray, it will be the happiness of a happy life to dwell. It is for me now, a stranger and undistinguished in the world, to justify, if I can, the presumption which addresses you."

He fancied, as he stood beside her, that he heard

something like an attempt to speak, but the word was unspoken, and the fair head was so bent that the golden curls shrouded the lips from his gaze.

“ I am a gentleman by birth and by education,” he went on, “ and, having assured you of this, I have little to tell you of the past, except that in the profession which I entered I have obtained such successes as it permits—small matters to vaunt of, were they multiplied by the thousand—triumphs gained for others, and worthless except as stepping-stones to a profitable reputation. But I have won them, and may accept them as omens of a nobler success. To achieve this, I had prepared for the severest and most discouraging of struggles—accident has suddenly favoured me, and I feel that I shall rise. It is not, therefore, as an unknown lawyer that I have ventured to address you, but as one who, having his upward way to make, believes that he will make it. And though the best coronet in the peerage would give its possessor no title to speak to you, Miss Trevelyan, in other than the humble tone and confession of unworthiness with which I stand before you, one word from you—one word, one sign, ever so slight—and, armed with the hope it will sanction, I will look at no success as impossible which can make me more worthy of you.”

He had shot his bolt, and the period between

the twang of the string and the striking, or missing of that shaft, is memorable in the life of some men. The golden head was still bent.

"I asked but to be heard," said Bernard Carlyon, after a few moments, "and you have most kindly heard me. Perhaps you may deem that I presume on your indulgence if I say more, much, very much, as I have yet to say. But it is not to such a nature as yours that I would plead with many words. Dearest Miss Trevelyan, a destiny I never thought should be held in other hands than my own awaits your sentence for happiness or for destruction. I have dared to seek your love, what is there else on earth that I should not dare to seek? what, if possessing that love, I should despair to gain? My heart is before you and with it my fate. Miss Trevelyan—Lilian!"

How that golden hair trembles, and now, Bernard Carlyon, she is going to look at you; can you not keep your heart from those violent throb-bings? man, you will want words presently—you think she is going to move her hand, have yours ready. Laid upon yours her little hand, that is well, and you are on your knee, and the blue eyes look kindly enough upon you, pale as is the beau-tiful face, and yet you can look away from it. Only to cover the white hand with kisses. Well, you are excused! But speak; will you not? You could knock down two ruffians for her the other

day, and yet you will not speak to her now. Tears on her eyelashes too, and no one to wipe them away. What does T. P. Cooke say about the man who would refuse to stretch forth his hand to assist a virtuous female in distress? Ah! that is better, a good deal, and though she blushes, she is not angry. Hold her to your heart, for it will never be in such good company to the day it flutters for the last time.

And now Carlyon can find words enough, and to spare, and as Lilian does not try to escape from him, it may be supposed that the unbarring of the floodgates of his oratory and the ardent avowal of his own passion, and of his conviction of her unsurpassable merits, physical and mental, and of his intense devotion, which, beginning on the little hill near Aspen, is to last, at the shortest date, for ever, are not disagreeable, though her answer, breathed very low, and repeated in a still lower voice, is of the briefest.

“Bernard.”

But it makes him transcendantly happy, and he has condescended to believe that there is something in this world decidedly worth living for, a creed to which he would have given a very half-hearted, non-natural kind of adhesion when we first met him.

“And you leave us to-morrow?” asks Lilian almost sadly.

Why, he had come thither to tell it her, and

now that she tells it him, the information comes like news, and disagreeable news. He feels hostile towards Lord Rookbury, despises Mr. Selwyn, and wishes, as they pretend King Something did when asked to sign the death-warrant, that he had never learned to write. No, he suddenly revokes this last wish, and looks upon a pen as a thing plucked from the wing of an angel.

“I may write to you, dear one? And you will write to me—is it not so?”

“Do you wish to write to me?” says Lilian, softly, yet not without a little tiny smile.

No, Carlyon wishes never to have occasion to write to her, and always to be by her side, always to be ready to listen to her slightest word, always—but it occurs to me—I never read novels myself—but all this sort of thing must have been said before, some time or other.

However, as the having a young lady, however beautiful, always in the arms of a young gentleman who intends to rise in the political world, might be inconvenient in the House of Commons, and at Cabinet Councils, and otherwise, it is agreed that Carlyon shall go away, and shall write to Lilian, and that she shall answer his letters. And then Bernard, promising that he will never have a secret from her in the world, and very likely meaning it at the time, and designing to show her the list of the very first cabinet he forms, even

before laying it before Her Majesty, proceeds to tell her of his interview with the Jesuit, Mr. Heywood, and of the strange proposal the latter had made to him. Lilian disengaged herself, but not unkindly, from Carlyon's arm, and listened attentively, and with a deep flush upon her brow, and more anger in those blue eyes than a stranger might have thought they could express.

"And Mr. Heywood begged you to take time to consider his proposal," asked she, "and then to come over to Lynfield, and answer it? And you are here to-day."

"Ah!" said Carlyon, interrupting her, "do not for one moment connect that foolish interview with one which has been the event of my life. You do not, I know—I see."

"I trust you in everything, and for ever," answered Lilian, frankly, and again extending her hand. "But you do not know Mr. Heywood."

"Better than he may think," returned Bernard, "and at all events, it is something to know that one does not know him. But I treated his proposal as an idle attempt to play with my feelings or to mystify me, and I purposely broke the appointment he made with me. Did he not expect me on Tuesday?"

"It is hard to say when he expects anybody," replied Lilian, "but I remember that he was at home the whole of that day."

"And," said Bernard, "there was a sort of sign which he suggested to me. He had become aware—you had, very naturally, told him, dearest, that a chain of yours was in my hands."

"I have never mentioned it," said Lilian, "to him, or to any one else. It was so trifling a matter," she added, smiling archly, "that perhaps I had forgotten it."

"But," said Carlyon gravely, "this is a little strange. He distinctly said to me that he had your authority to ask me for the chain."

"And you gave it him?"

Bernard drew forward a few links of the chain, by way of reply, and Lilian looked pleased.

"He proposed," said Bernard, "that I should retain it until I met him here on Tuesday, and then, if he saw me return the chain to you, he was to understand that I did not entertain his scheme, whatever it might be."

"And am I to have my chain back again?" asked Lilian, smiling.

"Never," replied Bernard, earnestly, "if you will permit me to retain it. But may I ask you, dear Lilian" (he must have privately practised the use of her Christian name, it came so naturally) "whether you comprehend his real drift, and in what way he supposes that I can aid in restoring you the inheritance lost to your family?"

"Why not ask the question of himself," said

the priest, who had entered the room unperceived by the young people, and who now stood between them with a smile, indicating that he was rather amused.

"An eaves-dropper, Sir?" asked Carlyon, indignantly,

"Why no," said Heywood, carelessly, "not exactly, though as one's ears are given one by Providence to hear with, I do not consider it wrong to use them when desirable, and I should have been an eaves-dropper, as you elegantly word it, had there been any reason. Well, I presume from Miss Trevelyan's heightened colour that your conversation has been interesting,—may one hear the result, omitting sighs, adjectives, and other non-essentials?"

"The only part of it I need trouble you with, Mr. Heywood," said Carlyon, "is that which relates to a falsehood you thought it worth while to tell me. You use explicit language, and am sure you will excuse it."

"I scarcely remember the exact words of our conversation," said Heywood, "but my impression is, that I told you several falsehoods, or rather parables, which are falsehoods in illustration of truths,—at once the civilier and the more philosophic way of describing them."

"Of course," said Bernard, with a very lofty scorn, "it is profoundly immaterial to me in what

light you consider an untrue statement, but I thought it proper to mention to Miss Trevelyan why I had not obeyed an order you pretended to bring, and I find that it was your own invention."

"Do you know that I like you, young Carlyon?" said the priest, with a good-natured air of patronage, "I like you for coming here to-day, rejecting my plan without hearing it, and honestly avowing your love for this young lady. I did not think, I tell you frankly, that, after what I had said, you would have had the courage to do it."

"As it is impossible," replied Bernard, who thought he saw the trap, "to say how far you have to-day carried out your theory about ears, I shall make no answer to you, except to observe that my courage, be it what it may, was not learned in a seminary where the tutors are courageous enough to teach listening and—"

He hesitated, for tempting as was the alliteration, Lilian was in the room, and Heywood was a clergyman. So he shifted the strong word and added "parables." The priest laughed out.

"I tell you that you will *do* in the House of Commons—cultivate your talent for retort—it is the only thing that ever lifts the debates out of commonplace, now that oratory is abolished. And so you have plighted faith, young people, and are to correspond until Mr. Carlyon becomes Premier, and in the meantime he is to keep the chain now

round his neck. The whole arrangement seems very complete, and I make you my congratulations, and answer for the approbation of Uncle Eustace, which of course you have not thought worth troubling yourselves about."

"Father Heywood," said Lilian, with some firmness, "we are not strangers, and I can read a kind meaning in a mocking tone. But Mr. Carlyon—"

"Better known as 'Bernard' a quarter of an hour ago," interpolated the priest, and Lilian grew crimson, but continued—

"Mr. Carlyon does not understand you, and ought not even to think himself insulted in a family whose daughter he has saved from insult."

"Mr. Carlyon has repaid himself a thousand-fold," returned the priest, "for striking a couple of blows for Miss Trevelyan, in enlisting her to strike one for him."

"That is true," said Bernard quite radiantly, "whether meant in sincerity or in taunt."

"I told you," said Lilian, turning to him, "that if you came here you would meet some strange people, and I have no doubt you are convinced I was right."

Father Heywood took up a book, and glancing at it for a moment or two, threw it down again, and said, as if the subject had just occurred to him,

“By the way, Bernard, for I treat you as one of the family now, you are a Protestant, I suppose, as much as anything. Do you come over to us? If so, I will lend you some theological books, which you will find consoling, and confirming, and so forth.”

“Francis Rabelais, perhaps,” said Carlyon, hardly knowing how to meet Heywood’s levity. “Thank you, I have a very good copy.”

“Miss Lilian Trevelyan must do the rest,” said Heywood, disregarding the answer. “It is a trifling matter to you and me, you know, whether one’s bishops make a cross beside their names, or do not; but some people are particular. That, I think, is the only difficulty likely to arise with Uncle Eustace, who has rather strong notions about the pale of the church, and I believe,” he added carelessly, “Lilian has given him some promise—or was there not something about a curse? However, that is all easily arranged where people are in earnest.” And nodding a pleasant good-bye to the others, he lounged out of the room, humming an air from the Huguenots.

“Do not speak,” said Lilian, eagerly, “I know what you would say; but it would be what hereafter you might wish unsaid.”

“I am dumb,” said Bernard. “I have said enough to-day,” he added tenderly, “and shall never speak again to such happy purpose.” With

a good deal more to the same effect, which was very satisfactory, no doubt, to Lilian Trevelyan, but might be less so to any other person. It need only be recorded that after a protracted interview, which neither seemed inclined to abridge, though really everything that either had to say had been put into every variety of form, and something sadly like repetition had been going on for a very long time, Bernard and Lilian actually separated, in the pretty words of Mr. Praed's song, "with a kiss and with a prayer." And Bernard little thought how hard he rode as he hastened across the country to Aspen Court.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NIGHT WITH THE SPEAKER.

IT was known that the Cabinet was to fall. The Opposition trumpets, some of them brazen enough, had long been sounding, fierce as those of mosquitoes, around the Ministerial Jericho, whose walls were already heaving and riving. But few knew how near was the grand crash.

The Minister to whom Carlyon had been accredited by his aristocratic friend, was a tall, large, grey-headed, able man, of extreme industry, and untiring energy. He was the model of a man of public business. But, far from being a mere red-tapist, he held enlarged and elevated views, and a high sense of principle, for none of which did the keen-sighted public give him much credit. For this there was a reason. The Minister was a haughty man, perfectly confident in the purity and wisdom of his own intentions, and in his ability to carry them out. He knew that with the matters in his own department, not to say with those of half the other *bureaux*, he was as well qualified to deal as any person in England, and by dint of a tolerably well justified contempt

for most of the units with whom he was brought into contact, he gradually acquired a less defensible contempt for those units in the aggregate called a people. He served the nation well, but he cared little for the compliments of his masters, and, happening to be a rich man, still less for their wages and perquisites. When called to public account for any of his actions, he was not only ungracious in his explanation, firing away upon his interrogator, as if the latter had maliciously sought to interrupt the business of the country, but he was in the habit of assigning the most technical and routine reasons for acts to which he had really been prompted by high and noble motives. Ever refusing a statesman's explanation when a clerk's was sufficiently plausible, he was estimated by the nation as a clerk, though in reality a statesman. Week after week the narrowness of his notions was pointed out to the public by speakers and by writers, when the fact was, that he was narrow only because he chose to be precise. Never was a valuable servant of the people less appreciated, and more unpopular than Francis Selwyn. He was a religious man, also, and not ashamed of his religion, and this did not add to his popularity; for though, as of course we all know, England is the most pious country in all the world, the possession of personal religion and of a sense of its obligations, by

a public man, is vulgarly held to be somewhat incompatible with any very brilliant discharge of a statesman's duty, to say nothing of the withering sneers to which the suspicion of such superstition exposes him when people, who know religion only as something connected with church-rates and the shutting beer-houses in church-time, imagine they detect him in error. Whether all this arise from an imperfect view of the political or of the religious duty, is not now the question.

Mr. Selwyn received Bernard very kindly, and evinced more interest in ascertaining from him Lord Rookbury's views of the coming crisis than Carlyon anticipated he would display. It seemed strange that any sort of understanding should subsist between two men of such opposite principles and habits. The Earl was a sceptic and a libertine, the Minister a believer and a purist. But they entertained a certain mutual regard, and while Lord Rookbury would lament that a devilish clever fellow like Selwyn would wear that Evangelical starch, and humbug himself with the idea that he believed the cant he talked in Exeter Hall; Mr. Selwyn would express his sorrow that the fine natural talents of Lord Rookbury should remain so utterly unbaptized into the service of their Giver. And sometimes they would meet, and have a rattling theological fight —for Selwyn could give a good many reasons

for the faith that was in him—and in these conflicts always gave his best, while the Earl, who, like a great many other exceedingly irreligious men, was very fond of studying polemics, could hold his own manfully, and indeed came down upon Selwyn with the Fathers, in a force which the Evangelical, who held those great lights as rather dim compared with certain newer lamps, was not always prepared to meet. So that, utterly despising the Earl's principles, and loathing his practice, Selwyn maintained a great respect for his intellect. Besides which, Lord Rookbury, who was utterly impartial in politics, and would serve his friend, at the whim of the moment, with the profoundest contempt for the public interest or for his own consistency, had done some very useful things for Selwyn and his party.

“Suppose we see the week out, Mr. Carlyon, before troubling you with any business. There will be some hot work in the House, which you may as well see, and I will put you under the gallery.”

The state of parties was a feverish one. The budget, eagerly looked for, had been produced, and had satisfied nobody—it was assailable on a hundred points, and defensible only as a whole and as a compromise. On another subject, a strong measure had been demanded by the country,

but only a strong speech and a weak measure had been accorded by the government. An aggrieved, or at all events a complaining party, had mustered for a general charge, and their dexterous leader, devising a form of appeal in which the largest number of independent members could join, had made a damaging onslaught upon the ministry, who had been barely saved by their own official votes. An important, though fragmentary motion on the franchise was opposed by the government, and carried against them by a triumphant majority. It was clear that the *coup de grace* must speedily come. Paragraphs appeared, stating that Cabinet Councils were sitting daily for three and four hours, and the "Court Circular" spoke of numerous interviews with the Sovereign. An immense number of rising young men obtained their own consent to be Under-Secretaries under the new *régime* which was coming—the country attorneys rushed to church to pray that a dissolution might be necessary—four Peers became perfectly clamorous at the neglect their claims for promotion had experienced, and one of them wrote an ungrammatical remonstrance, which was malevolently shown at the Lycurgus, and parodied in an evening paper, whereby the enraged remonstrant became convinced that the world was at an end. Parliamentary officials growled that all this would retard the prorogation, and there would be no

getting to the Rhine and Danube before the end of August, when the evenings close in so confoundedly. West-end tradesmen, in their wrath at the injury to the season, wished there was no constitution, and sighed for a despotism with a George the Fourth as Emperor. The funds began to dance up and down in the Threadneedle thermometer, and, in short, England was in a fidget, the England worth speaking of; the people generally being most impertinently unconcerned.

At last the hour came for the last act. Long before four o'clock the entrances to the House of Commons were crowded with sturdy, sneering artisans, who must all have had business to attend to, but who thought proper to leave it in order to see how Members of Parliament looked, on their way to do execution. It was a fine hot afternoon, and many of the Ministers walked to meet their fate. It was curious to hear the growl of recognition with which they were greeted, and the unhesitating interpretation which was put upon the expressions their faces were interpreted to wear.

“ Looks quite cocky, don't he? Means to die game, I should say.”

“ Ah! but look at this one. My eye, isn't he down in the mouth a few?”

“ Don't like losing his salary. Small blame to him.”

“ That’s Warpingham. How he grins, as much as to say, I’ve feathered my nest, so go it, you cripples.”

Amid these and other popular criticisms the devoted ministers entered the House. Selwyn had walked down with Carlyon, and as they crossed from Great George Street an enlightened politician remarked,

“ The tallest one, the oldish cove, that’s Selwyn. A blessed proud chap that—the Queen calls him Master Lucifer whenever she speaks to him.”

“ Not likely,” said a pale young man, who had an impression that good manners lingered at court.

“ O, but I know it,” returns the other. “ The young un’s his son, whom he’s training up in his footsteps, and you see he walks as ambitious as blazes.”

“ Come, now, Selwyn was never married, I know that,” says a third man, “ for my aunt lived with the family, and he’s very religious, and strict like.”

“ What’s that to do with it?” replies the first speaker. “ It’s those saints that are the worst of the lot”—and the censor entered into a miscellaneous imprecation on psalm-smiters, pantilers, maw-worms, and other objectionable religionists, which lasted until Selwyn and his companion had got into the lobby. Placing Carlyon in one of the privileged pews below the strangers’ gallery,

the minister walked up the house, and to his seat on the front row to the Speaker's right, took a despatch box on his knee, and began to master with practised celerity, the salient points of a subject in which he had just been told he was to be interrogated.

There had been a great "whip," and the House was very full, but the nation needed not to flatter itself that a public question had assembled four hundred and thirty-seven members at four o'clock. They had been driven in by private influences and agencies, to vote on a private measure—the Choggleby and North Bunkum Union Junction Waterworks Bill. This was merely a plan for giving some twenty thousand people clean and cheap water, in place of some dear and turbid mess supplied by the existing companies, and the latter had of course exerted themselves to get it rejected. The House was hot and angry, and the sun streamed fiercely down, and shareholders and directors were bawling in harsh and vulgar voices (for it is singular to notice how the snobs in the House are called up on these private bills), and denouncing or supporting the scheme with all the grace and courtesy of rival tradesmen. At last the House recollected that it had met to discuss the affairs of the nation, not the dividends of water-jobbers, and shouted for a division. The bill was rejected by 291 to 146, and the Choggle-

bites and Bunkumites were doomed to another year of dirty water.

Then came the petitions. Petitioning is the grand right of the Englishman, and it is a proud thing to see how it works. Up gets a member, roll in hand.

“A p’tition, Sir, from inhabans of Mumble-mumble, praying that House will be pleased to inumble mumble mumble mumble duty on mumble?” And even if he did not sink the last word, it would be drowned in his skip from his place to lay the precious document on the table, where a clerk instantly seizes it, and thrusts it into a large carpet bag.

Little think the people in the little borough, when the petition is carried round—with the explanation of reasons, and there is the signature under protest, and the signature as a personal favour, and the signature as matter of principle, the signature withheld as a duty to the country, and all the other negotiations and considerations and fussifications, ending with the careful transmission to Our member, and the request for an acknowledgment by return of post, if not by the electric telegraph—little do they dream of the mumble and the thrust, which in a quarter of a minute at longest dispose of their manifesto. Perhaps, if they saw the process once, they would keep their parchment for their children’s drums,

which make a good deal more noise than any petitions

After the petitions came the questions. Mr. Cornwall was anxious to know whether we were going to war with Russia this week or the next; Mr. Devonshire, what pattern Government recommended for the stamps on butter; Mr. Dorset, when the Archbishop of Canterbury was to be put on half salary; Mr. Somerset, why the Edinburgh post had been late on Tuesday fortnight; Mr. Wiltshire, whether there was any objection to his having copies of all letters ever written by Government since the accession of William Rufus; Mr. Hants, whether he might have a copy of a private note sent by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Mr. Quartermaine, of Greenwich, about the Ministerial Whitebait Dinner; Mr. Sussex, what day the codification of all the laws of England would be ready for distribution; Mr. Surrey, whether the Home Secretary would recommend a pension to Stanislaus Zzychymzschii, a Polish pickpocket, who had been incarcerated all night on a charge which there was no evidence to support; Mr. Berks, whether the Mint intended to coin silver fivepences for the convenience of buyers of newspapers; Mr. Rutland, when the nuisance of church bells in London was to be put down; and Mr. Monmouth, what week it would be convenient for Government to give

up to him in order that he might set forth his notions on Government, Reform, Agriculture, Education, Public-houses, India, the Factories, the Ecclesiastical Commission, the Ordnance Survey, the Currency Question, and a few other topics to which the honourable member wished to call the attention of the House. And minister after minister having answered, refused to answer, or evaded the inquiry addressed to him, it was hoped that the great business of the evening was coming on. But no: an Irish member, Mr. Valerian Fitzbog, had a notice on the paper, and was enchanted at finding a full House, which was compelled to remain, instead of a dead certainty of a count out. He favoured the assembly with an hour and a half of brogue, the theme being the dismissal of the Master of the Workhouse at Kil-lyscullyoleary. Five minutes would have sufficed a Saxon for stating this grievance, but then a Saxon, in his stolid dulness, would not have enriched his argument with a sketch of the Danish Invasion, the Battle of the Boyne, the French Revolution, Lord Castlereagh and the Union, and a few other matters apparently not necessarily connected with the case of Mr. Mac-parings, the dismissed master, but deeply interesting to lovers of Ireland. Of course, if one Irish member speaks, five others must attack him, and five more must batter his assailants, so that an

Irish row helped on the evening until half after nine. Then the Speaker retired, with views which strangers interpret according to their respective natures—it being a moot question, and variously decided, whether the right honourable gentleman goes to take a chop, a yawn, a cigar, a shower-bath, or a sherry-cobbler. He returned. A cry of order—down go the galleries—members to their places—reporters lean forward—the Speaker glances at the Government—a ministerial hat is moved—a minister rises for a moment, murmurs a few words—and the Speaker's voice proclaims that at last the work of the night is on. Then, crowded, and not in the best of temper, the House addresses itself to listen. We may laugh—but the sight of a constitutional assembly of free men waiting an exposition from the Minister of a Constitutional Sovereign, is a fine one, and suggestive of many a bloody historical page, turned before that leaf was reached.

Briefly, clearly, and as calmly as if he did not know that the measure he advocated was doomed, the Leader of the House explained his bill, pointed out its necessity, and its advantages, compared and contrasted it with other schemes for the same purpose, and presented it to the House as a fulfilment of one of the pledges given by Ministers, through the Royal lips, at the opening of the Session. He attempted little display, but in his concluding

sentences his voice swelled into loftier cadences, as with a significant energy he declared that even should the House come to an unfavourable decision, which he would not anticipate, he should not feel the less certain that he had done his duty. The cheers which followed would have been absurd in their redoubled vehemence, had they been showered upon the speech, and not upon the speaker and the situation.

He was hardly down when one of the staunchest leaders of the Opposition stood at the red box on the other side. He confronted the ministers boldly as became the fearless and honest commoner, lord of half a county, and with a pedigree few lords can show. Lacking the practised composure of the minister, he grew excited, even with the game in his own hands, and the broad, hale face reddened up to the roots of the silver hair. A fine, kindly old man, that county member, and one who would far gladlier have led the whole House after one of his foxes, than have hounded them on to tear down a minister, but he thought he saw duty, and it had been a way with the men of his blood, for eight hundred years, to do it. The House rang again with his lusty old voice, as he denounced the bad measure and the worse cabinet, and moved that the bill be read a second time that day six months.

The Speaker's eye fell right and left with ex-

treme impartiality, now calling up an energetic barrister, bent on a Solicitor-generalship, and now a wealthy shipowner, strong in well-applied sense, stronger in ill-applied aspirates. A professional orator delivered his prepared harangue—it did not fit very well, being an answer to what had not been said, but was otherwise unexceptionable—and another gentleman, primed with champagne, let off a “smart” speech which he had got ready for a previous night, but had not been able to make—the jokes missed fire certainly, but so they would have done at any other time. Ireland pronounced against the Minister, and again enlivened the scene by another little internicene war, in which Munster scoffed mightily at, and was scoffed at mightily, by Connaught.

The night wore, and the great guns roared not. Timid cries of “divide” broke out as two or three bores successively rose.

Watching his opportunity, and springing up after the very stupidest of these, in order that he might snatch and mangle him by way of an opening compliment to the House (which tolerates bores wonderfully, but rejoices to see them tortured), the great Leader of Opposition stood in the battle. A perfect and accomplished debater, calmest when apparently stormiest, with a studied tone for every taunt, and a practised gesture for every jibe. His shaft missed no mark, his arm

struck no blow short. He appealed to ancient principles, to historic names, to the honourable traditions of party, to the proud elements of the constitution, and he urged, in accents alternately sonorous and bitter, that for an old principle the advisers of the Crown had substituted a Manchester-made expediency; that they read history backwards, as witches read prayers, and with the same desire, that of raising a destructive fiend; that they had abandoned party traditions for disgraceful hucksterings, and that if they had hitherto abstained from destroying the constitution, it was chiefly because they had hoped to make a better bargain by selling it. With these and a few other gentle imputations, delivered in the most masterly and artistic style of which oratory is capable, and with a glowing eulogium upon the party with which the speaker was advancing to save the country, he concluded one of those dashing and deadly philippics, which are a feature in Parliamentary history.

Ten men rose at once as he sat down, for men get audacious at midnight, and like the Glendover, are ready to stand forth in Seeva's sight against the most dreadful Rajah. The Speaker selected the tithe of patriotism, and Carlyon, in his place in the pew, only waited to see that the chosen member was a dull good man on the Government side.

"If they will hear him," he thought, "I can manage."

And sometimes they will hear. After a brilliant display it is not unrefreshing to have a dullard for a little while. Hence many men get an audience which it is to be hoped they do not misunderstand. The House did not cry the speaker down—and Carlyon left it.

"To Lincoln's Inn Fields," he said to a smart cabdriver, "as hard as you can go, and a shilling a minute for every minute under ten."

Heaven help the old women at the crossings that night, if there were any; but old women, male and female, must be run over sometimes for the good of the country.

In about five-and-twenty minutes later something was put into Francis Selwyn's hand. The bore had just sat down, and another on the opposite side was pleading, amid the impatience of the House, for a very few words only.

"Hear, hear," said the Minister, to the surprise of a good many around. The orator looked gratefully across the House, and really felt sorry that he was going to abuse the man who had interfered for him. Even members of Parliament have human feelings.

Selwyn looked through what had been sent him. It was a pamphlet, with pages turned down and marked. His quick eye saw what was supplied,

and for a moment he smiled, as if tempted to use it. But his lip curled the next instant. He leaned across to a subordinate colleague, a lawyer of the readiest and the most unhesitating oratory.

“Would you like a brief,” said Selwyn with a meaning look, and holding out the pamphlet. The other seized it, and with the preternatural barrister-skill, further improved by House of Commons practice, extracted all its value in a few seconds.

“O, rather!” said he, in reply to Selwyn, and with an eager determination which made Selwyn laugh.

Down went the bore and up got the ministerial barrister, dashed at the opposition leader like a falcon, and paid him back sarcasm for sarcasm, and insult for insult, shouted against his shouts, and sneered against his sneers. Coarse but effective, the onslaught told; but, when brandishing the pamphlet in the air, he brought it down upon the table as impressively as if it were a document he had kept for years to be ready for that night, and amid the derisive cheers of the House, stated that it was a corrected report of a speech delivered not a very long time since by the honourable leader of the Opposition, in which he avowed sentiments utterly hostile to those he had expressed that night: the *coup* told as such things always do. As, in a high, clear voice, the

Minister read passage after passage, with comments of ironical cheering, re-echoed (as in the Cato case) "to show that the sarcasm was unfelt," and the long lines of members waved up and down with excitement, Bernard Carlyon actually began to think that he had done something for the nation. He was a young man, and we must not be too hard upon him for being pleased with himself that he had remembered the mischievous document, the less so that after the division, which took place an hour later, and the ministers were defeated by a majority of fifteen, Francis Selwyn introduced him to three or four of them in the lobby as the gentleman who had brought down the pamphlet, and that in reply to his disclaimer of any merit beyond that of memory, the Leader of the House of Commons, who is a classical scholar, said with a good-natured smile,

"You have profited by your Eton grammar, Mr. Carlyon. *In tempore venisti, quod omnium est primum.*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PERILS OF THE DEEP.

IT is due to our friend, Mr. Paul Chequerbent, to say that when he sat down to the banquet which he gave to himself and Miss Livingstone, in honour of his triumphant acquittal at the bar of justice, he fully intended to depart into the country on the following day. But a dinner, even such a one as can be procured in London, too frequently changes a man's course, and converts intentions, which might become the basis of very meritorious actions, into a portion of the pavement whereof the Spanish proverb tells us, and which, if such proverb represent fairly what is going on elsewhere, must be in as constant a state of disarrangement as the pavement in our own metropolis. Mr. Chequerbent, yielding to the spirit of the convivial board, at which all man's best feelings possess him, expressed his conviction that the kind attention Miss Livingstone had shown him, at a period when such service was most valuable, deserved some other recognition than a mere dinner, and that a very poor one, and he justly remarked that so few people behaved pro-

perly in this world that virtue ought not to go unrewarded. He therefore demanded what Angela would like as a memorial of the day which, if justice were done, would go down to posterity with that of the acquittal of the Seven Bishops.

“Seven bishops! whatever were they tried for?” asked Angela, whose reading on such matters was restricted to the memoirs of the Scotch gentleman with roses tull his shoon, Jack the painter, Suil Dhuv the coiner, and such other historical personages, whose cases have been reheard at the foot-lights, and reproduced in penny *feuilletons*, with a coloured frontispiece.

“They were obstinate parties,” said Paul, “who always voted against King Charles having any money for his ships, so one day he came down to the House of Commons and seized them, saying, ‘Take away those baubles.’ The ladies in the ventilator called out that the king ought to have had too much sense to be there, on which Oliver Cromwell held the Speaker down in his chair, and told the soldiers to fire at the ladies.”

“Good business,” said Angela, whose theatrical eye saw a tableau at once; “of course the manly soldiers refuse to fire upon helpless women, but let fly at the bishops, who fall on the ground in white dresses left, ladies shrieking in gallery opposite prompt, red coats of soldiers right upper entrance, king with crown and robes in centre.

Suddenly the parliament bursts into flames, and curtain down on red fire. I wonder if old Muzzy, who does our first pieces, ever read of it. Write down for me where the story is to be found.

This little parliamentary episode being arranged, Paul reiterated his demand to know what Angela would like.

"O, never mind anything now, Paul, dear," said Miss Livingstone, "the weather will be finer soon, and then you must get me up, regardless of expense, to go to Hampton Court and no end of places, but my bonnet looks very well at present, and so does the blue plaid, especially since I have altered the sleeves, and quite fit to go out in."

"Then I'll tell you what," said Paul, "one day more will not make much difference in my going away, and we'll have an out to-morrow."

"But you are sure you won't get into any trouble by it," said Angela, "because that's all nonsense, you know, for the sake of a holiday. I am sure I often look at the bright sky of an evening, about six, and think how nice it would be to go and walk quietly in the fresh air, instead of turning out of the sunlight into a den where one must spend seven or eight hours in the heat, and dust, and smell, and gaslight, exerting and exciting myself till I am ready to drop; but I never was forfeited, for all that."

"I should be forfeited about twenty times

a-week," said Mr. Chequerbent, "and I only wonder why you professionals are so loyal, knowing how particularly quickly managers pitch *you* to the deuce, if they can get hold of anything likely to be more profitable."

"Some do, some don't," said the little actress: "at the Frippery, where I sprained my ankle, they were very kind, and sent me wine and jelly, and a railway ticket, when I got better, for me to go to my aunt's at Sevenoaks."

"They could afford to do that," said the sceptical Paul, "never paying any salaries to anybody who is well."

"Ah, some people are paid there," said Angela, "though, of course, for appearance sake, they are bound to declare they never get a shilling. Fancy Placket, for instance, as selfish an old card as lives, stopping there all this time without his money. It's only the poor things who can't help themselves that are not paid."

"I can tell you something about that," said Paul, "but now look here—where shall we go to-morrow?"

"All places suit this child," said Angela, smiling, "provided she is taken the greatest care of, and everything of the best is provided for her."

"It has been very hot to-day," said Mr. Chequerbent. "If it is like this to-morrow we'll go on the water."

"I am agreeable," said the young lady. "But now, will you mind doing me a favour?"

"Will you do me the favour of naming it?" said our Paul, politely.

"Perhaps it will bore you, but never mind for once. I want you to let Mrs. Bong go with us. She's a good old soul, and behaved very well to me when I was out of an engagement, and hardly knew which way to turn. It would be such a treat to her. Do you mind very much?"

"I don't mind at all," said Paul, who was good-nature itself; "but she will look such a thundering Guy—won't she?"

"Not at all," said Angela; "she looks very respectable in private life, and sometimes smartens herself up prodigiously, if she happens to have an extra shilling, poor old thing. Once, you know, she was a very fine woman indeed."

"I don't know it," said Paul; "but my father may have heard his grandfather say so."

"Nonsense, now, Paul. When she was Miss Stalkinghorse she was greatly admired by the Duke of Cumberland."

"I know," said Paul, "but he broke off with her before he fought the battle of Culloden in seventeen hundred and forty something, about a hundred and ten years ago. It was very cruel of him—but that was his nature,—and she has never heard from him since. However, she shall go

with us, if it's only to comfort her. Where does she live?"

"Over the water," said Angela. "I will send her a note to-night, and we will fetch her in the morning. Shall I meet you on the bridge?"

"On Hungerford Bridge, at eleven, Miss Livingstone," said Paul; "and be good enough to remember the right one, as I knew an engaged couple who made a similar appointment, and one of them mistook the bridge, so they walked up and down in parallel lines, for six hours, one on Hungerford, the other on Waterloo, actually within sight of one another, if they had thought of looking, and then rushed home and indited furious farewells for ever. So think, if you please, of being hungry, and of fording a river without your shoes and stockings, which no young person could better afford to do than you."

"How shockingly rude you are!" said Miss Livingstone, with a little imitation of prudery. "And now put me into a cab and send me away to my work. No, I will not have any coffee, but I will have some maraschino before I go."

How Paul passed that night matters not. He had his own reasons for keeping away from that part of town where he was likely to encounter acquaintances, and there is some reason to think that he beguiled the hours by visiting a series of very ungenteel entertainments of a musical and

dramatic nature, the prices of admission to which varied from twopence to sixpence, and at most of which he followed the customs of the place by taking a great deal of miscellaneous refreshment. At length, which may mean towards two o'clock, he judged it time to go to bed, a feat which he performed at a quaint old inn looking upon Smithfield, and much patronised by farmers and other bucolic persons, whose business is still transacted upon the death-place of Wallace and Wat Tyler. In the morning, after an economical breakfast in a room much like a vault, into which huge men in rough coats were perpetually tramping, and demanding Muster Boggles, Muster Whawp'n, and other friends, and drinking stimulants, on the chance of those gentlemen coming in (which they never did), Paul, feeling a good deal soddened, and not over-delighted with himself, made his way westward. It was a lovely morning, but the sun shone rather more brightly than seemed to Paul in good taste—a fault which people who spend the over-night as he had done, are apt, I am told, to find with weather which makes the virtuous quite radiant. Little Angela was very punctual, and they set off into the wilds of Surrey in quest of Mrs. Bong.

In a tiny, ill-built cottage, in the middle of a large, dreary nursery-garden, Mrs. Bong resided. As they entered the gate, which was an enormous

distance from the house, a tremendous voice came down upon the wind, and bore a greeting which might have been heard through a storm. Angela's pleasant little organ was exerted in return, but was utterly inaudible by her friend until the space between them had been diminished by a good half, when, by dint of extreme straining, Angy contrived to say—

“Sorry you've got such a bad cold. You can only whisper.”

“Come along, you saucy thing,” roared Mrs. Bong with a kindly smile, strangely at variance with that portentous voice. And as they approached, Paul could quite make out that she must have been, as Angela had said, an exceedingly fine woman in her time. The commanding figure was not entirely unpreserved, and the face, worn as it had been by a hundred troubles and a thousand coats of bad rouge, retained a pleasant expression. The eyes were still bright, and there was a sort of melancholy animation which seemed to say that the poor woman was heartily tired of life's drama, but that she would play her part with spirit until the last long “wait.”

“And so you have found the old lady at last,” said Mrs. Bong, whose voice toned down to manageable thunder as soon as she got her visitors into the smallest room that ever held a sofa bedstead, a great black chest of drawers, and a mighty

arm-chair, besides some ordinary and puny furniture. "And now sit down; you get upon the sofa, Sir, and you here, Angy. And now, will you have some beer after your walk? Don't say no if you'd rather not."

"We don't know the liquid," said Angela.

"Never heard of it," said Paul. "But still one would like to learn, and if it is anything cool and refreshing, we are not too proud to try it."

In a minute, a not over-clean but handsome lad was vigorously dragged from an outhouse, a squealing dusty kitten was torn from one of his hands, and a jug thrust into the other, before he could well shut his mouth after his first astonishment, and his aunt's finger indicated a solitary house with a new blue sign-board appended thereto. He was started at full speed, but Paul suddenly dashed after him.

"Halt, young Shaver," cried Mr. Chequer-bent, arresting him, and putting a shilling into his hand. "Mind you say that the beer is for me, the Right Reverend the Lord Archbishop or Canterbury, and give them this, and then you'll get it good. Now, cut." And he went back to the room, to which his hostess had not yet returned.

"What were you saying to the poor boy, Paul?" asked Angela.

"Oh, nothing; only one don't want the old girl

to be spending her money for us; I daresay she has not too much of it. But tell her to make haste and get ready."

"Put a pin through your nose and look sharp, aunty Bong," cried Angela. "I'll come and quicken you."

Left to himself, Paul took a survey of the contents of the apartment. On the walls were likenesses of the Reform Ministers, published at the time they earned that imposing name. The Lord Grey was scowling frightfully, and menacing the throne with a huge roll of parchment, inscribed **THE BIL**; the Lord Brougham, in a wig, was waving over his head, as beseemed his energetic nature, another roll, lettered **WHOLE BIL**; while the Lord John Russell was indignantly slapping his bosom with a third vast parchment, marked **AND NOTHING BUT**, three Parliamentary feats which Mr. Hansard shamefully omits to chronicle. The room was littered in every conceivable way. Half a dozen yellow covered play-books, much worn, lay about, and all the lines belonging to Mrs. Bong's parts were scored under for convenient study. There was a dream-book, stated to be a correct reprint from one which the Emperor Napoleon always consulted on the eve of battle, and therefore especially useful to a lady; and there were some treatises on crochet, improved by the various figures being filled up with eyes and

noses, and adorned with legs and arms, by the amateur labours of visitors. And the apartment was further enlivened with a mass of tarleton, soiled satin shoes, dress linings with thread all over them, play-bills, pink stockings, various belts, half a cookery book, a basket of greens, and some gold and silver trimming, divers ginger-beer bottles, and a few other trifles. But presently the Shaver returned with the fluid he had been sent to fetch, and looked very wistfully at the wet halfpence constituting the change, which he honestly paid over to Paul.

“ You may keep that, Sir,” said Paul, reading the boy’s look; “ but conditionally, mind me, on your not laying any of it out in jewellery or race-horses, which bring so many young men to destruction.”

The Shaver grinned prodigiously, and again rushed off; and from his walking about, late in the day, with no eyelashes to speak of, it has been surmised that he effected an ineligible investment in gunpowder. But he was seen no more until after his aunt and her visitors departed.

Paul and his companions made for the Borough, where he insisted on stopping to buy himself a flat, shining, sailor’s hat, leaving his own in the vender’s care. They reached the London Bridge railway station, and then Mr. Chequerbent announced that he proposed to go to Gravesend, and

demanded what time his friends must be in town to discharge their duties to the public. Mrs. Bong's theatre did not open for the season until next Monday, so she was sorry to say she was her own mistress.

"So am I," said Angela, "for a wonder, for there is a ben to-night, and I am in neither of the pieces."

"Who's Ben?" asked Paul, puzzled.

"I am not sure whose," replied Angela, not seeing that he was mystified, "but I think it's the Jovial Vaccinators and Friendly Confluent Scarlatinas who have taken the house between them, and they have got up the *Surgeon of Paris*, the *Black Doctor*, and the ballet of *St. Vitus's Dance*, as appropriate to the occasion. They always have a good benefit."

"Ben—benefit—*tideo, carpo, twiggo*," said Paul. And away they went for the city of shrimps.

"And how are you getting on, aunty," asked Angela, as soon as she was ensconced in a corner of one of the large carriages by which the North Kent directors have done their best to destroy the comfort and privacy of first-class travelling, and which entail upon the unfortunate passengers near the door the necessity of a fight at every station to prevent twice the proper number from being forced in by the officials.

"Oh! pretty well, my dear," said Mrs. Bong,

in deep and melancholy tones. "The money is regular, such as it is. But it is hard work to earn it. For the last six weeks, and till we closed, I headed a conquering army, and also a band of brigands, every night, with five fights; but that's nothing. But I had to be carried over the rocks, tied on a wild horse, which with my weight is rather nervous business; and I have had to double a part which poor little Mrs. Scurchin was obliged to give up, being as ladies do not wish to be when they have to ride on an elephant, and slide down by his trunk. Then we have a nautical piece three nights a-week, and I have rather a tiresome bit in that—I have to hang from the mast, in a storm, while the ship rolls and pitches up and down, and this goes on as long as the applause comes; one evening they kept me swinging for ten minutes—and the week before last the thing broke, and I fell through a trap and bruised myself sadly. I was obliged to lay up one night, but they stopped my salary, and that won't do, you know, with five mouths to feed, so I crawled to work again directly. And our rehearsals are very heavy, with so much spectacle; and I fully expect to break my limbs one of these mornings out of a cockle-shell of a car which they are trying to make six horses bring in on their backs, at an awful height, and me in it—the poor things kick so and get so unmercifully beaten; but Brax

swears it is as safe as a cradle—a cradle on the tree-top, I tell him. However, it's only slavery for life, that's one comfort, and it'll be all the same a hundred years hence, that's another."

"By Jove," said Paul. And he became thoughtful for full three minutes, considering how hard some people worked for a morsel of bread. But his meditations did not last, and he rattled away in his usual style until they reached Gravesend.

"We'll dine at Wates's," said Mr. Chequer-bent, "and in the meantime we'll embark on the bosom of the deep. I hope you are good sailors."

Having ordered dinner, Paul sallied forth upon the little pier in front of the hotel, and was beset by half a dozen owners of boats, each of whom, with that good feeling peculiar to the race, assured him that every one of the rival candidates was a rascal, had no number or licence, kept an unsafe vessel, and was generally, hopelessly, and utterly worthless. But Paul knew his men, and speedily slanged them into tolerable silence. He made choice of a clean boat, handed the ladies in, and immediately became intensely nautical.

"You may sheer off, skipper," he observed to the boatman, as soon as the sail was set, "I shan't want you."

"Good gracious, Paul," said Angela, "you

mean to take the man, I hope. I am certain you can't manage the boat. O law!" and she really looked frightened.

"I'd better go with you, Sir," said the man.

"Nonsense," said Mr. Chequerbent, indignantly. "Do you think I can't manage a bit of a boat like this? I'd sail her to Margate with my eyes shut." And he persisted in turning out the man, and Paul taking the tiller in hand, the boat glided from the pier.

"No luck about her," shouted one of the disappointed candidates. "Find her way to the bottom, I should say."

Angela heard the speech, and looked so discomfited, that Paul stood up in wrath, and solemnly promised the fellow the best punch in the head he had ever received when they should return, and took note of the man's appearance with the full intention of redeeming his pledge.

A light breeze caught the sail, and they went pleasantly enough down the river. The roar of a Scotch steamboat was Angela's first fright; but Paul managed to give the monster a wide berth, and they danced gaily in the waves of her wake. And he got pretty decently away from the dark hulk of an emigrant vessel lying near. Paul began to be convinced that he was a first-rate pilot, and proceeded to discourse very learnedly to the ladies upon the mysteries of nava-

tion. He pointed out the various craft, explained the characters of schooners, barks, brigs, cutters, and yachts, and was quite eloquent about luffing, tacking, hauling your wind, putting up your helm, and so forth. He was a little taken aback by Mrs. Bong, who, from playing in nautical pieces, had learned about as much as most "yachting men" know on such subjects, and who ventured to correct his allegation that port and starboard were the same thing, and that larboard was the right-hand side of the vessel; but as, according to his custom when confused, he offered a bet on the subject, Angela would not believe him wrong. On went the little boat merrily, and a little nautical song from the pretty actress was introduced with much appropriateness.

"How glorious to be upon the waters, and feel that you ride them as their master!" said Paul, heroically. "After which sentiment I will refresh myself with a cigar—smoke not disagreeable to you, Mrs. Bong—rather like it than not, of course—so do you, Miss Livingstone—very good. Then here goes." And he made fast the tiller, while he bent forward to get his paletot, which he had tossed into the bow.

As he was fumbling for his light, a tremendous shout from Mrs. Bong came upon his ear, and it was followed by a scream from Angela. He leaped up, and to his especial dismay, beheld a

steam-tug dragging along a huge vessel, and bearing directly down upon them, while a perfect storm of curses broke from the deck of the tug, with an order which would have been perfectly intelligible to a seaman, but which, in Paul's state of fluster, sounded only like a command to go to a very bad place indeed. Nearer and nearer came the tug, Mrs. Bong thundering her mandates to it to get out of the way, and Angela screaming and clutching at everything in turn in the vain hope of doing some good. Paul made a leap at the main sheet, but missed his footing and fell down, and Angela, seeing what he intended, instantly grasped the rope, and pulled it into an unmanageable knot, at which Paul, as soon as he could recover himself, hauled and swore in vain. Then was a moment of intense terror for them all, and the next, the tug struck the boat amidships, and a crash was heard, at which Mrs. Bong roared in her fright, while Angela, white as ashes, trembled like an aspen leaf, and Paul, in a mingled state of wrath, remorse, and fear, stamped, raved, and looked helplessly around. In another instant they would be under the roaring paddles of the steamer. It was but a moment, however, for the tug's men, not altogether unaccustomed to such scenes, were on the alert, an enormous grappling iron was dashed into the boat, and she was brought up alongside. But the crash had been so severe, that she

was no longer seaworthy, and the water began to pour in through the fissure.

“We are sinking—we are sinking! Save us!—oh, save us, if ye be men and sailors,” exclaimed Angela, her stage recollections coming back to her in the hour of need.

They told better on the Thames than in the magistrate’s room, and the captain of the tug, sorely reluctant, however, issued the orders to ease and to stop her. Ropes were thrown out, and in a few minutes the party had scrambled upon the dirty deck of the tug. Angela immediately fainted, and Paul, in his efforts to restore her, lost a considerable part of the sarcasms which were lavished upon him by the crew of the tug. But as the pretty girl gave signs of returning animation, he said spiritedly,

“Now, be good enough to hold your tongues on the subject. You will not lose by civility, but you may by insult. The affair was an accident, and there is an end of it. When can you put us ashore?”

“To-morrow some time, perhaps,” said the captain. “There goes your boat, you see.”

And, truly enough, there was the boat, filling, and in a very fair way to verify the prediction of the discontented mariner on the pier.

CHAPTER XIX.

LILIAN'S WHITE UNCLE.

EUSTACE TREVELYAN was the third member of the group assembled in the drawing-room at Lynfield Magna on the day of Carlyon's first visit, and he was alluded to by Mr. Heywood, in the subsequent and memorable interview, as one whose consent must be obtained to the engagement of Lilian and Bernard. If the death-like ashiness of that man's features be remembered, it is probable that his history will be read.

Well-born, Eustace Trevelyan was the son of parents whose property, though considerable, was not so large as to enable their sons to dispense with professions. Sensitive and amiable, but remarkable neither for high intellect nor a vigorous frame, Eustace passed the ordeal of a public school with considerable suffering, and without gaining the mental or the physical distinction, either of which, attained in that noble but perilous arena, sends forward the young victor with so proud a step to the sterner battle of life. He was weak at wrenching out the rich meaning from the subtle Greek chorus, slow at planting the rattling facer

which brings out those shrill plaudits from the schoolboy ring. His nature was to avoid competition of every kind, and he would make way for the youngest rival who displayed pluck and push. The boys despised, the masters tolerated him. He was, of course, taken in hand three or four times by teachers, who can do and will do so much for a boy with capabilities, but on the non-elastic nature of Eustace the most earnest effort was wasted. It was found useless to apply the ordinary awakening process which so often makes a neglected, spoiled, or careless lad discover how much he can do, and how particularly essential it is to his comforts that he should do it. Eustace wept, and struggled to please—for it was his tutor's smile more than his praise that the boy desired—but it was not in him, and a night's toil produced nothing but English that was vicious, and Latin that was downright criminal. The kindest remonstrance was urged, the most patient assistance was given, and Eustace felt grateful, wiped his red eyes, and went humbly to work, but Juvenal became aimless, and Sophocles meaningless, in the mouth of their feeble interpreter. Punishment was inflicted, not wantonly, but as one of the experiments which, when all else has failed, it is but justice to try—Eustace writhed, but the stimulant put no new energy into him. Then there was an end of the matter—he was let

alone; and simply cared for. What more can a teacher do with such a mind—a teacher with a hundred minds to cultivate? For ninety-nine of that hundred, the discipline of the great school is salutary and bracing—Eustace was the hundredth, and the exception. The great school did him no good, and its system embittered his young life. When, in after years, he reflected upon this, he had not the philosophy to be consoled by the recollection that all systems must work unpleasantly for somebody, and that so small a minority as he represented ought to rejoice that the majority was so large, instead of complaining of its own unhappiness—but then it has been said that he was not remarkable for his intellect.

Eustace was happier at Oxford, as was natural. There the mildest man can remain unmolested, if he pleases; and Eustace was, by dint of hard teaching, a proficient in the art of keeping out of the way of other people. The calm, grand old university was very kind to him, in the way he most wished, that is, he was not troubled. At school, he had been compelled, at times, to run, to row, and even to fight, but at college there is no compulsion to become athletic against your will. He neither read hard nor gave wine-parties—was neither medallist nor pugilist—neither wrangled nor chaffed. He was simply quiet and inoffensive, and he was allowed to

remain so. Lord Algernon St. Agincourt (himself screwed) screwed up Eustace's door once, and the present excellent Bishop of Beldagon occasionally threw a cat, adorned with crackers, in at his window, but these were the only persecutions which he had to record during his college life.

A profession, as has been said, was necessary for him, and there was a family living, of some value, marked down as his. He duly received holy orders, and was as duly inducted. And although the Reverend Eustace Trevelyan was not the man to fight the Church's battles, to clear new areas of action for her, and to maintain them against all comers, qualities which, it would seem, become day by day more necessary in the servants of the altar, which must be missionary, or ruins, his gentle nature and conciliating disposition made the quiet duties of his rural parish pleasant enough to the meek priest. Yet, even in the retired district committed to him, there occurred scenes which he would gladly have avoided, strife which disquieted the interposing pastor more than the brawling rivals: death-beds, where his calm formulas and common-place consolations became mockeries in the presence of solemn scepticism and of maddening remorse. Eustace would retire from such conflicts, conscious that he had been neither dignified, nor wise, nor successful; and with a bewildered brain and fluttering nerves, would fling himself

down in his garden, and repine that antagonism was a condition of useful existence, and a condition that even uselessness could not escape.

But a more perturbed lot was destined to Eustace Trevelyan, and in due time it fell to his hand. The petty irritations, the darker incidents of his ministration, troubled him but for a time, for the same nature which bade him shun conflict bade him also shun its memories; and he gradually trained himself, not unsuccessfully, to the habit which dismisses the things of yesterday, and looks forward. He was calm, but not content. He distrusted himself, his intellect, and his energies, and at times he even found a humiliating comfort in the consideration of his own insignificance. He was nothing—he was nobody. This was at least a pledge that, acquit himself poorly, meanly as he might, there was no circle of spectators to shout derision at him, no grave superior to regard him with pitying contempt. He was no longer at school. He lived on as it were by sufferance, but he was unwatched except by his own carking, self-reproaching spirit, which brought vague charges against itself, hints, and whispers, and an ever-recurring consciousness of short-comings and unworthiness. Nor had the priest yet learned, even in the place whence he taught, how all such voices can be silenced. He proclaimed the language of the oracle, but it fell meaningless upon his own

ear. During this period of his life, Eustace's being was an unhealthy stagnation, at times disturbed, but only that the stagnant waters might again sleep in their sullen repose.

But the waters were troubled at last, though not for healing. There returned to his estate in Trevelyan's parish a gentleman who had long resided abroad, that his property might recover itself from the effect of the share its owner had taken in certain revels—fashionable when a Regent set the fashion. The property was by no means clear again, for Sir Frederic Larrendon had essayed to live with his betters, and Corinth is an expensive locality. But there was enough for the shattered man, once a blood, and twice a dandy, but now a querulous, chalkstony valetudinarian—enough for his beautiful, black-browed, black-eyed, Frenchified daughter, who came with no good grace from her Boulogne circle of scampish pleasantness to rusticate in an English country-house. Flora Larrendon liked adoration murmured from under moustaches, and forgave it for being scented with cigar smoke and seasoned with *double entendre*. Fearless, unhesitating, and unabashed, she was the star of a French watering-place, with its *écarté*, intrigue, and shiftiness; but in an English country town—all propriety, spite, and Sunday-schools—Flora's splendid black hair streamed like the hair of a comet. The sen-

sation made by the dashing Miss Larrendon was painful, and the sentiment she excited was something like that of the fashionable young woman in the "Spectator," who went to a quiet church in such style that "one very wise old lady said she ought to have been taken up."

Flora Larrendon was doomed to her rural seclusion, at least until her wearisome and exacting father should, like other wicked, be at rest, or, at all events, cease from troubling. But amusement was necessary, and she looked round for it. Her state must have been desperate when she could find no better game than the poor clergyman. Really, however, she was reduced to Eustace, or plain and ornamental needle-work, for there was nobody else to speak to. The doctor of the town was sixty, and of the two lawyers, who were gentlemen, one had six children, and the other was newly married to a wife whom he liked. There were no country houses within reasonable distance, and in fact Eustace was the only educated man within reach. Flora turned her superb eyes upon Eustace, and almost felt compassion towards him for the extreme helplessness with which he instantly dropped at her feet. As usual, the man made no fight at all. It was really no victory for her; it was the poor racoon on his tree, calling to the never-missing American sportsman, "O! is it you? *you* needn't fire, I'll come down."

All that Eustace wanted, and felt he wanted in himself, he found in Flora Larrendon. His slower intellect, his timidity, his uncertainty, were all rebuked, but not, poor fellow, unpleasantly, in the presence of her quickness, courage, and decision. She read him at a glance, and needed not to notice twice his nervous entry into her presence, his colour heightening at the shortest notice, or his wordy and unprecise speeches (so different from our epigrammatic snip-snap, *nous autres Français*), to see how fragile a person was her spiritual pastor and master. Her real difficulty was to avoid frightening him by too much encouragement, for she had quite perception enough to know that he was a gentleman, and sensitive, and that a very little extra-demonstration would scatter the flirtation to the winds. But the good Flora managed very well, and Eustace loved for the first and only time in his life. I wish that Flora had been a better girl, for she did great good to Trevlyan.

The passion awoke him. He had, hitherto, been little better than a maunding boy; he became a man. He turned a new face upon the world, and confronted that which the world turned upon him, physically, as well as morally. The step grew more steady, the eye more resolute, the voice more decided. The moral nature hardened into firmness. Eustace began to do his

duty as one who had himself to answer to, but who was not afraid of the tribunal. He submitted less to dictation from others, and insisted more upon his position and dignity. The priest asserted himself, and demanded reverence for his credentials. The change was sudden, and though there were few subtle-souled psychologists in his parish, the effect was noted. In a less sensitive nature than that of Trevelyan, it would have been less observable. This elevation and improvement, Eustace owed to Flora Larrendon. But in her presence there was little of it seen. There, Eustace was what he had been on their first interview. It would seem as if they had then, and at once, fallen into relative attitudes, which were not to be disturbed, and this Eustace himself felt, and would not have changed it if he could. He knew that he was stronger as against the world, and he was content to owe that strength to the woman before him. He loved, and yet was grateful; the paradox was in his nature. It will not be found in that of many men.

Far less strange was the fact that his love reacted. When the flirt took the parson in hand, it was a heartless snatch at a victim. When Flora and Trevelyan became intimate, and frequent interviews enabled the gentle priest, in some degree, to unveil the better part of his nature, Flora Larrendon, in her turn, was rebuked. It

had so chanced that in her life she had never come in contact with a character like Trevelyan's. Its externals were ridiculous, especially to a girl educated as Flora had been, but, when these were penetrated, there was something better beyond. She had read through the diamond cement with which various other natures had been faced, and had found rubbish behind the glitter. Breaking through the opaque crust which surrounded the real character of Eustace, she found—among other trifles—a heart. As with the name of the architect of the Pyramid, graven on the marble, over which lay the plaster inscribed with the title of the tyrant who commanded the edifice, when time had removed the worthless inscription, the writing worthy of honour was revealed. And Flora read it, and her old solace, her French novels, were somewhat neglected, and she began to speak more gently to that good-for-nothing old father.

Here might have ensued a pleasant story—how the two spirits, mutually improving and assisting one another, became one, and how the two faiths were pledged, and how Eustace, growing more manly, and Flora more womanly, they married, and, presenting nearly the best type of marriage and its object, made each other's happiness thenceforth, and until the passing bell. But it was not to be so.

They were all but formally plighted. Flora met him on his ministerial rounds, in the peasant's cottage, in the village-school, by the bed of sickness, and was zealously taming her wild heart to his loving hand. One day he had ridden to some distance to visit a brother clergyman, and was returning home somewhat rapidly in the twilight, when his horse started and flung away from an object lying in the road. Trevyean had reined in and dismounted, to make out the cause of the animal's fear, before he noticed that a gate which opened into the road had swung across it, and that the field was one of Sir Frederic Larrendon's. Flora, a fearless rider, had been aware of the hour at which he would return, and had set out to meet him. It could be but matter of surmise that she had dashed across the field, instead of taking the bridle-lane, that she had put her horse at the gate, and that he, deceived by the approaching shadows, had struck it, and it had swung open. At least so said those who sought to disengage the body of Flora from the clutch of the half-maniac priest, kneeling, raving, and blaspheming, if the wild noises wrung from torture have a guilty meaning.

“ The hair is long, and thin, and grey, but its greyness, and a stoop, manifest even while he is sitting, seem the traces of suffering rather than

of age. But the strangest characteristic of his face is its utter bloodlessness. Its whiteness is startling, and troubles the eye. It is a nearer approach to the ashiness of death than we might deem that life could make, and live." So was Eustace Trevelyan described, but many years had then rolled over his head.

There were new phases of trouble for that man. Strangely, as some may think, when the first shock and agony were over, Eustace regained his calmness with no long delay. He would not leave his parish, though an exchange was offered him, and though his duties would daily lead him where the memories of his sorrow must spring up at every turn. He spoke much and often, and never hesitated to speak of her who was gone, or even to dwell upon the fearful event. Her tomb was his especial charge, and he covered it with inscriptions. These were all in the ancient languages, and were read by few in that obscure country town; but one who could interpret them would have found that they all spoke of gloom, of sadness, and of terror. The grave for him who traced these lines, was the mansion, not the door. One line was repeated on all four sides of the tomb—it was this, *Verum tremendum est mortis sacramentum.* But there was no one to ponder on the words, or to muse on the process which might be

seething and rending the brain which had suggested them.

The pastor did his work, and, as it appeared to those among whom he laboured, well. The sick were tended, the poor were visited, and the Eternal Truths were spoken; nor did Eustace shun the secular portion of a country clergyman's duty: offenders were pointed out to the law, and the hardness of those who would grind the faces of the pauper was checked at the instance of his spiritual protector. And when, after about a year's time, it was suddenly bruited about that Mr. Trevelyan had crossed the country to his bishop's palace, and, entering his Lordship's presence in his surplice, had slipped it off before his bewildered superior, and casting himself on his knees, had prayed to be relieved of his ordination vows, none were more astonished than the flock which had beheld him doing his pastoral work so regularly and efficiently.

Such a scene, however, did take place. Eustace had thrown himself at the feet of his bishop, and implored that hands which had bound on earth might loose on earth, and that the credentials, by virtue of which he spoke with authority, might be cancelled. The good bishop was puzzled, for though the prayer was wild, and its being granted was impossible, the reasons the suitor assigned were such as no man could treat lightly. Had he

uttered one incoherent sentence, the bishop could have summoned assistance, but Trevelyan, at the episcopal foot, spoke better than he had ever spoken in his life, and the kindly-natured prelate had something of the sensitiveness of Eustace himself, and recoiled from the idea of transferring to a mad doctor a man who in admirable and earnest language was pleading to have a weight taken off, which he felt was crushing him—to be relieved of a Nessus robe, which was burning into his vitals. His Lordship could only raise Eustace from the ground, and beg him to take advice as to the state of his nerves.

Eustace Trevelyan was, however, mad.

He was watched, and finally placed under restraint, but it was one of the mildest kind, for he had always been gentle, and his phase of insanity, as it developed itself, was one of sadness and frequent terror. The thought of his ordination vows came upon him but seldom, for a newer and a more material fact had been superadded. It was the fear which had crouched and whispered in those dead languages on the tomb of the lost one—the fear of Death. To this terror he yielded himself with a species of involuntary readiness. He spoke of it, he read of it, he surrounded himself with all that might remind him of it, and yet it would throw him into paroxysms like those which shake the frame of the victim to hydro-

phobia when theplash of water is heard, or its surging seen. It was the fear of the death itself, and not of what might be beyond, that tortured him. He would sit for hours, reciting passages with which his religious avocation had stored his memory, and in which the tomb is spoken of as a prison-house, as a pit, as a place of darkness and forgetfulness. And these he would vary with verses, sung in a moaning key, and culled from all those grim hymns with which unauthorized expounders have, through years, terrified young and sensitive minds, by a cruel mingling of the material and the spiritual ; those lyrics, too coarse for the Greek mythology, too grovelling for the worshipper of Odin, but accepted as Christian interpretations of the most refined and most exalted mysteries. These Eustace Trevelyan would mutter and moan over for hours. But he was not content with mere words ; he would eagerly select pictures and other representations of mortality, and with these he would adorn his apartment, to the very curtains of his bed, making gentle reproach if any one sought to remove them ; and the relics of mortality itself had even a greater attraction for the diseased brain. At first it was thought well to oppose this morbid taste, but the extreme suffering into which the poor creature was thrown by any such demonstrations, and the abject weakness with which he petitioned to have

back his ghastly toys, prevented any prohibition being continued.

Do you remember the skeleton which sat in Aspen Court?

Not that Eustace Trevelyan sank into imbecility. When, for the time, he was relieved from the death-terror, he was calm and mild in his manner, neither isolating himself from those with whom he dwelt, nor abiding silently among them, as is the manner with many who are similarly afflicted. The original character of his intellect seemed to be preserved in its ruins. Eustace still shunned all opposition, and in compliance with the wish of others would remain with them, converse with them, and even bear his part with a semblance of cheerfulness, which sometimes deceived a casual observer. But it was sorrowful to note that all that he did seemed prompted, not by his own will, but by an instinctive desire to avoid offending; and even more sorrowful to watch the furtive glance which he would direct towards the face of any of his companions, if he imagined that he had done anything to cross their wishes. When he passed into the charge of Lilian, under circumstances which will be explained by-and-by, it became a study and a duty with her to observe these eager, timid glances, and to meet them with a ready and reassuring smile, until at length poor Eustace acquired a child-like habit of looking to

Lilian for approbation of his acts and words, a habit hardly less piteous than his previous apprehensions. Mr. Heywood also treated him with exceeding consideration, but then the feminine tenderness and the vigilant watch were wanting, and at times the intellectual man forgot the need of his helpless brother, and the full, proud eye fell coldly on Trevelyan, who would quiver under its gaze. But never was an unhappy and bereaved man more kindly cared for than Eustace under the guardianship in which we found him.

One feature more in his insanity was connected with his terror of death, and that was his clinging to what seemed to hold most promise of life. To the young, and especially to children, Eustace attached himself, as if in their society were some charm against what he dreaded so deeply. His gentle manners easily won the youngest to his side, and if permitted he would sit for hours in such companionship, soothed in being allowed to hold some little hand in his, and almost happy if a joyous child would nestle by him, or make a pillow of his knee. And it was chiefly to children of that nature that his affections swayed—those whose life was most a sport, and in whose veins the healthful blood ran merriest. For—and more than one pang was caused by the strange antipathy—he would withdraw from the caress of a

child whose pallor or pensiveness seemed to give note that its days might not be long with us. And slight as was the manifestation, and timidly as Eustace would edge away, his gesture, which might have something of prophecy in it, would set a mother's heart throbbing wildly, and send her from his presence in a passion of tears.

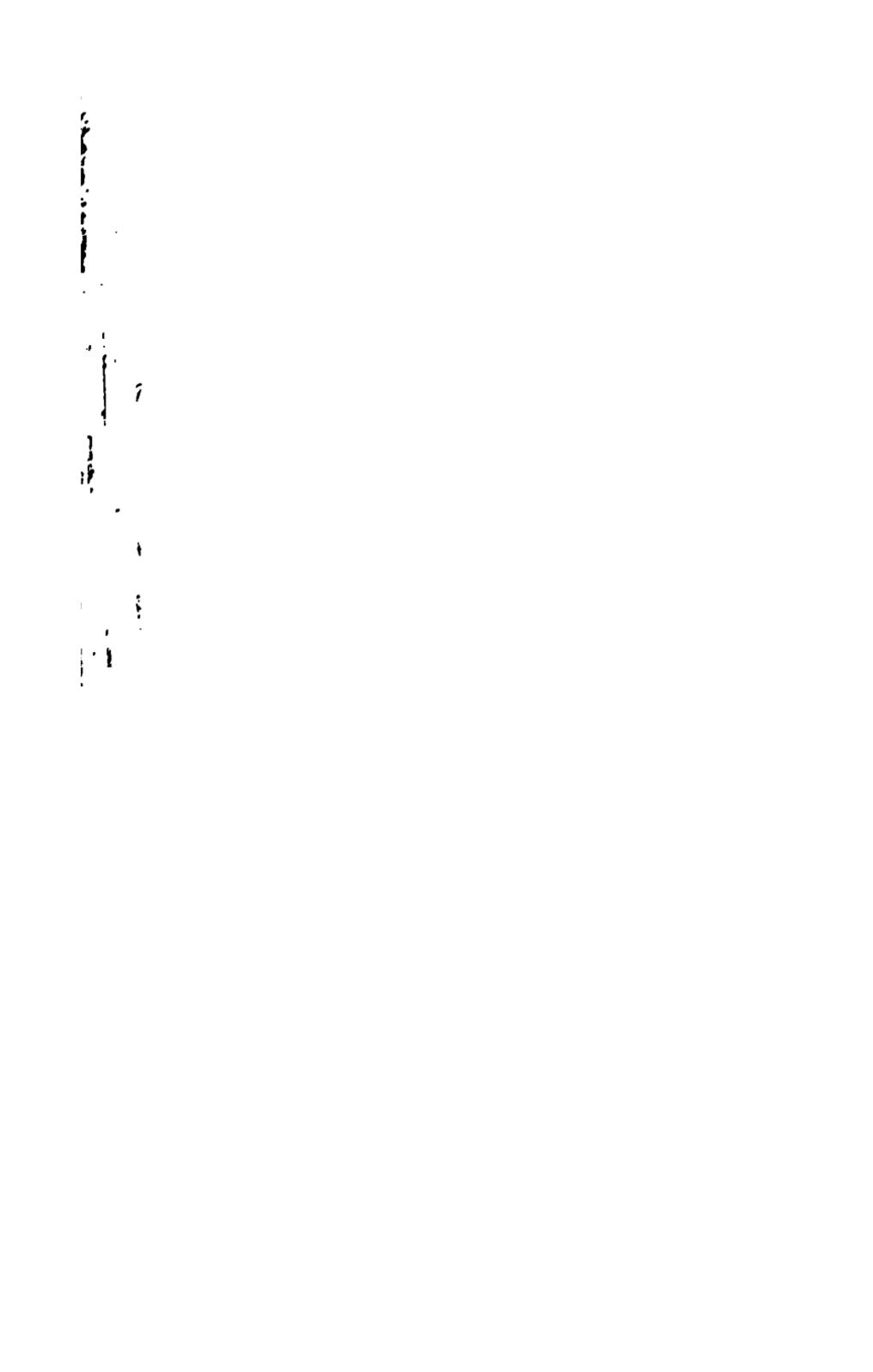
His history has been sketched. In himself a man of no mark, Eustace might, under ordinary circumstances, have plodded his undistinguished way through life, neither honoured nor happy, but with perhaps something more and something less of suffering than falls to those at once less sensitive and less forgetful. But his being, alternately agitated and stagnant, was once stirred to its depths, and its vitality, suddenly put fully forth, vindicated itself for that once, and then ceased for ever. In some old book of sea-travel, there is a story which may parallel the case of Eustace Trevelyan. Be calmed at evening in one of those western seas, and beguiling the weary time as they might, the sailors brought on their deck a vessel of the phosphoric water in which they were floating. The luminous appearance ceased on the withdrawing the water from the deep, and the vessel stood dark among them. But there was a chemist on board, who fetched from his chest a phial of some potent acid, and poured it into the black water. In an instant, and roused into an

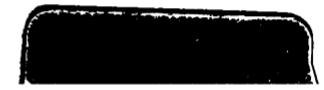
intolerable agony by that deadly liquid, the chaos of sea insects in the vessel put forth their myriad lights, united in one intense and lustrous sparkle—and were dark. No chemist's charm could ever wake them again.

END OF VOL. I.









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